

I'VE SHED MY TEARS

A Candid View of Resurgent India

D. F. KARAKA

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I'VE SHED MY TEARS

A Candid View of Resurgent India

There was a brass ball and a gold ball on a table walled at the top. They kept running round and round and bumping into each other and into the sides of the wall and into each other. Then the brass ball stopped and looked at the gold ball and said, "Aren't you afraid of wearing off?"

"Wearing off what?" the gold ball asked.

—A PARABLE I FIRST HEARD IN AMERICA

1

Men don't often cry, not men like me. But that night in my room in a New York hotel I stood by the window and shed my tears. The blurred tracery of lights at which I gazed was the Manhattan landscape. The crowds in the streets below were Americans celebrating victory and the end of another war.

My thoughts were far from the Manhattan scene. I was only conscious of one fact: I was born an Indian. India was the country of my people.

I thought then of two men I had met in this war. One was an Englishman, Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander. The other was a Jew I met at Belsen the day after its liberation. Both men had known moments of defeat.

Alexander was the British general at Dunkirk. He was the last man to leave the shores of France when the Nazi hordes hurled themselves against the coast. When I met him at Caserta, he was in a very different position. I asked him, "What were your thoughts that day at Dunkirk, sir?"

"Things looked pretty bad at the time," he replied. "I didn't know how we would ever win this war. But I had a faith that we as a people would not be conquered."

The Jew at Belsen was a pitiful sight. I shall never forget him. He was nothing more than a skin-covered skeleton, wearing the dirty and tattered striped suit of

the concentration camp. The stench of Belsen was strong on him.

I was a war correspondent. He came to speak to me. With effort I stood my ground, for he was like a scarecrow come to life, a frightening sight.

"Excuse me, sir," he said. "Have you a newspaper?"

He wanted tidings of the world.

I kept talking to him. I told him what was happening in the world from which he had lived away. Avidly he listened to every word.

"When did they take you?" I asked.

"Two years ago the Nazis took me and my wife. She was frightened. She wept." He swallowed the lump in his throat. "I told her, 'Mamma, we are going, but there will still be Jews in the world.' "

"Where is your wife now?"

"She died, the Nazis say. But you see, I am still alive."

These were the men I thought of that night, two men whose faith in their people did not waver in the hour of their defeat.

My case could bear little comparison to that of the Field Marshal or the Jew. It would be melodramatic if I pretended it did. But for me the sensitiveness of my race was inborn. I felt my hurt deeply. It involved something more than myself. It affected my country and my people. It had happened in America.

Hitherto it had never worried me what Americans thought of us.

Katherine Mayo had written *Mother India*. A number of American writers had painted my country in broad strokes, with poverty, squalor and disease everywhere, with men living in grass huts and women being stifled in *purdah*. Hollywood portrayed us as being turbaned and bowing, always bowing; Sabu, the Indian

boy, was made to do little more than straddle elephants.

Periodically, an American came to India with a ten-cent cigar in his mouth, the blueprints of a new factory under his arm, and when he went back to America a year or two later it was with the feeling of having been a crusader. In return, we who comprised one-fifth of the world's population were unknown as a race or a people to the United States immigration authorities. We entered America under the classification: "Other Races."

I never realized how all this affected us until I was made to feel the effects myself.

"The British took a long time," I said to myself, "but they understand us now."

America doesn't.

If this nation of Americans, as one of the Big Three, claims part of the leadership of the world it must have a correct picture of the other people who live in this world. It has to realize that, while the old landmarks of empire can still be found in our country, a new generation more truly Indian than the men who bowed, has emerged from that period. A silent revolution has swept over our mind and thought. While the masses appear to be dumb and pitiful, while the dead weight of caste and prejudice appears to stifle their growth, a new India has risen on its mediaeval trappings. Defective leadership and "communal" wrangles have persisted. Antiquated customs and quaint ceremonial have remained. But even so, momentum has gathered in our slothful continent and from life's substance have been carved new values, new direction and a new order.

We are once again a self-sufficient people. We are a people with self-respect. We are straining to resemble

our ancestors who helped to found what is called civilization today.

We are the children of culture. Civilization is our heritage. Struggle is in our blood.

These were my thoughts that lonely night as in my little world I tasted defeat.

I sat down to write my story.

2

In the churches prayers were said the morning I was born. Not for me. It was Good Friday, April 14th, 1911. A quiet, peaceful India heard an infant cry.

The house in which I grew up as a child was called The Cloisters. It stood on the ridge of Malabar Hill, the fashionable quarter of Bombay, our town. Across the road was the bungalow of the commissioner of police and down the hill was Government House. By the old standards of empire, our house could not have been more respectably situated.

The Cloisters was a spacious one-storied house. It had a short drive in the front and a large garden at the back. The garages, stables and servants' quarters were part of the buildings which stood away from the main bungalow. Along the front and back ran a long veranda where, in summer, we watched the quick sunset and the evening abruptly change to night.

Our home was a strange blending of the East and the West. There was an odd assortment of things in the drawing room which had come from all over the world. Its floors were covered with Persian carpets. Its furniture was of heavy mahogany with but a few delicate pieces. Brassware, gathered from different parts of India, had also found its place in the drawing room. The servants polished the pieces continually with the zest and ceremony of a religious ritual.

There was a piano at the far end of the room. Often I stood beside it wearing my Lord Fauntleroy suit and, as

my aunt played, I sang "Rule, Britannia!" Our English guests applauded.

There were a number of servants in The Cloisters. Most of them had been with our family for years. They had a sense of loyalty now seldom found in this world. They were poor but could be trusted. They had what we call *iman*. *Iman* was more than righteousness. "Honor" expressed its meaning better.

Two turbaned, gold-braided doormen sat all day under the porch in front of the house. They wore long, cumbersome, pleated gowns. The brass buckles on their belts bore the crown and the crest of the *raj*. The doormen were very proud of their dress for, though uncomfortable, the turban, the gold braid and the flowing gown were symbols of the government whose humble servants they were. Much of the prestige of British rule was reflected in the turbans and the braided gold. These doormen were the retinue of high government officials.

The head of the house was my grandfather. His first name was Jehangir. It was a Persian name. By blood we were the real Persians, descended from those who fled from their native land after the Arab invasion. Conversion to Islam was a part of the Arab terms to which my ancestors would not subscribe. So they took the sacred fire and fled. The ships in which they sailed one day sighted India and my ancestors made it their new home.

Here we came twelve hundred years ago and here we have stayed. We call ourselves Parsis, for we are the original natives of Pars. Therefore by race, if race be the criterion, we were established as Aryans long before the English, the Scandinavian and the Germans and many centuries before the Pilgrim Fathers arrived on the *Mayflower* with a Social Register tucked under their arms.

Today we muster 120,000 in all the world. Our early desire for segregation once made us regard ourselves as different from the Indians because it was thought the distinction would endear us to our rulers.

It is now accepted that we are Indians in every sense of the word. We are an essential element that has gone into building the India of today. Though our customs and ceremonies differ from those of the Hindus and the Moslems, in the building of a nation we have acted and reacted on each other and produced a new synthesis, essentially Indian, which will endure. In spite of our small numbers we are part of the Indian picture. In the political deadlock we present no problems.

We worship the fire as Christians worship the Cross. Our prophet is Zoroaster. But Americans know us better by our Towers of Silence where, to their horror, we offer our dead to the vultures. Vultures eat us as worms eat Christians. We are offered naked to the birds unlike Christians who are served up in wooden boxes.

"What difference does it make?" my grandfather once said. "It's more important how you live than how you are disposed of when you're dead."

My grandfather was a very handsome man. Fair-skinned, he had blue eyes. I remember him with light gray hair which later turned to white.

"I can see blue blood in your veins, Grandpapa," I once said to him.

"We have blue blood, my son," Maiji chipped in to say.

That was grandmother. Maiji is an Indian word. It means "great mother."

"Look at that picture on the wall." She pointed to the one of my great-grandfather. "It's his name you bear.

The day you were born he appeared in Shirin's dream and said, 'I am coming back to you,' and in the morning you were born."

Shirin was my grandaunt, Jehangir's sister.

"Once you are dead, you're dead. How can you be reborn?" I asked.

"It's not the person that is reborn. It's his love."

I could never understand all this.

"Long before you were born," Maiji said to me on another occasion, pointing to the same picture on the wall, "it was he who received King Edward VII on the shores of India. It was in the days of our good Queen Victoria. There is a picture of her in my room upstairs. When we went to England many years later, we were received at Buckingham Palace. Edward had become king and he remembered the incident well. He mentioned it to grandpapa."

Listening to Maiji talk of kings and royal courts used to thrill me so. It was like listening to a fairy tale with characters in it whom I knew. Maiji went on, "One day there was a children's fete where the prince was to be present. He arrived in a state carriage and all the civil and military officers were lined up and stood at attention. The Duke of Sutherland happened to stand just in front of me. He was rather tall and shut out my view. I requested him to let me have a look at the prince. He promptly made way for me. He was surprised that I spoke English and after talking to me for a little while he called an officer and said to him, 'Present Mrs. Jehangir to the prince,' and so within a few minutes I found myself on the platform sitting next to the prince."

"And then?" I asked eagerly.

She described to me the fete at which there was music

and dancing. Maiji said, "They played the waltzes of Strauss. Strauss was a great Austrian composer."

"Did you dance with him?" I asked.

"Indian women did not dance in those days. It was not regarded as proper."

There were many other stories like this and, at the time, they were nice to hear. British royalty had impressed my grandmother quite a bit, judging by the numerous occasions on which she talked of the House of Windsor. Perhaps it was because of instances like these, which appear a little futile today, that she concluded we had blue blood.

My mother, however, did not think so. She said on one occasion, "There is no such thing as blue blood. Blood is always red. Talking to a prince doesn't change the color of one's blood."

"Well, of course, you have different ideas," Maiji retorted.

"He is my son. I don't want him to get silly ideas in his head."

My father was always tactful on such occasions. He never interfered.

One day Maiji was opening her safe. It used to give me a feeling of richness being around. In the safe were her plush-covered boxes of jewelry, the packages of shares and securities, odds and ends. I knew them all so well. I knew what rings she had. I knew her bracelets, her necklaces, and all her other ornaments.

"One day you'll get a ring from me for your wife," she said, "whether I am alive or not."

I wanted something else she had. It was a miniature star.

"This you will have to get for yourself. It is the Star of India. You remember whose name you bear?"

"Yes, Maiji."

"This is only the miniature which we kept after his death. The real Star had precious stones on it. You see him wearing it in the picture downstairs. That was the real one."

"Will I get one like that?"

"You will, my son. I know you will. When I returned the Star I put a little cross on it and uttered a prayer that you who bear his name should get it again. But there may be other honors in your time, who knows?"

"Can't I wear the little one now?"

"Silly boy, these things are not worn for fun. There is meaning in them. It is the honor attached to them that counts, not the wearing of the Star. One day you'll understand."

"What does one do to get the honor?"

"You must be a loyal servant of the Crown."

"I don't want to be a servant."

"It's a public servant you must become. That's a different thing."

I was too young to know the difference.

There was another bundle wrapped in thin white muslin cloth, which she seldom opened. The contents of all the other packages I had seen.

"What is in that white bundle?" I asked.

"There are two books inside."

"Why do you keep books in a safe?"

"They are very precious books. They were given to our family by Tennyson, the great English poet."

"But why don't you put them out with the other books?"

"They are not just books. There is sentiment, friendship and feeling in them. These are things personal to us. They are valuable because of this. When grand-

papa and I die, your father will get them and they will descend in our family through the years.”

In spite of the follies and foibles characteristic of their India, my grandparents were a gracious couple. In them one found charity in its most unostentatious form. I was always conscious that wherever they went they were respected. Together they had seen Europe in the days when Europe was a distant land. They knew London, Paris and Vienna and had seen the life of Europe before two wars. They were never very rich in the material sense of the word but they had always so much to give. That was their richness.

They had married young. They had had four children: my father and my three aunts.

I remember a lot of little things about my grandfather. I can fondly recall how he would drive up the hill in his Sunbeam car when, after a day's work, he came home to change. I remember the beautifully cut clothes he wore, the smell of camphor from his wardrobe, his top hat, his tail coat, the initialled handkerchiefs on which he sprinkled a few drops of lavender or musk, and how like a handsome Edwardian he would drive out in the evening to his club. I remember also his choice handmade stationery with the letterhead of The Cloisters, and his impressive dispatch case which he carried to and from his office.

Among the earliest presents I remember receiving from him was a seal with my initials on it. I had a childish craving for wanting to write important letters when I had only just learned to scribble. Then I would put the seal on the envelope and post it. I wondered why nobody ever replied.

My grandfather had an opera hat which I called jack-in-the-box. I always wanted to wear it. One day he gave

it to me to the annoyance of my mother, who said, "I wish you wouldn't give him things he is too young to understand." I understand her embarrassment now, for I insisted on taking it to school the next morning.

My grandfather encouraged my childish craving for looking grown-up and important. He said that if I were to be a man of any consequence and a man of the world I should begin young. But the rest of the household thought he was giving me too early a start.

From him, at the age of five, I acquired a taste for claret and Scotch. When he dined at home it was my privilege to sip once from his glass before he drank. Often if I were not there he would send for me. "I am waiting for you to taste my wine," he would say.

"Do you think it desirable?" Maiji would caustically ask.

"The more freedom a child has now, the more he will know how to use it when he is free."

Every time there was a party in our house I was allowed, before being put to bed, to see the table laid with our gray and gold service, the Elkington silver, the unending series of sweetdishes from Mappin and Webb, the heavy cut-glass decanters with little silver tags of "Port" and "Sherry," the heavy damask serviettes.

All that was The Cloisters. Those were peaceful days if only because there was no struggle. No one wanted anything more. No one knew what more there was to want.

One day we moved from The Cloisters. But we moved in more senses than one. We moved into the open world.

The India of The Cloisters is dead. My grandparents lived to see it die. They did not shed a tear over it or if they did it was not more than one.

They realized that India like the rest of the world was changing. They were not the kind to lag behind.

I never again heard of Edward and the royal courts. Instead another name began to be mentioned in our house. It was the name of Gandhi.

3

Gandhi! The first time I heard his name it was shouted by a thousand voices.

“Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai!*” That was the shout. It meant nothing more than “Victory to Mahatma Gandhi,” but it was exciting to hear it shouted.

I rushed out on the veranda to hear it that first day as it came from afar. The millworkers were shouting it defiantly. Their voices were coming nearer.

It was a Sunday. My father was at home. It was about three in the afternoon and we were resting. But when the shouting was heard we came out on the veranda to listen.

“Go inside,” father said to me. “It’s dangerous.”

“There is nothing to be afraid of,” Tukaram, our chauffeur, said. “They won’t hurt us.”

“No one can tell,” father said. “There may be rioting.”

“Even if there is rioting, they won’t hurt us. We are Indians,” Tukaram replied with calm. “Come on,” he said to me, “I’ll take you into the garden and we’ll see the procession pass.”

My father did not like the idea. He was annoyed.

Tukaram was very sure of himself. “All you’ve got to do is put on a Gandhi cap,” he said.

“Don’t talk such nonsense.” My father raised his voice, “I’ll dismiss you if you do anything silly like that.”

“I can wear any cap when I am off duty,” Tukaram pleaded.

"Well, buy one and see."

"I bought one two days ago," Tukaram meekly replied.

My father was speechless.

"If there is trouble," Tukaram went on to explain himself, "and I don't have a Gandhi cap, it wouldn't be safe for me to be out. Then who will look after my wife and mother?"

"If there is any trouble, you tell them whose servant you are. Go to your quarters before I get very angry with you," father replied.

Tukaram did as he was told.

"Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai!*" the men were again shouting. They had come nearer. They passed our front door. They moved on and the shouting grew faint again.

Perhaps father was right. What good could shouting do for the country? But it was nice to hear. It gave me the same feeling of exhilaration as when I had sung "Rule, Britannia!"

We knew little about Gandhi then. I knew even less, for I was only a child. Pictures of him showed him as a frail little man. He had an emaciated face, sometimes set in a toothless smile, sometimes looking grave. He had large protruding ears. His eyes were soft. He wore a loin cloth and round his body was sometimes wrapped a shawl. He was often barefooted. It worried me that he never wore enough clothes.

As time passed, my father understood more quickly than I, the reason for Gandhi's scanty attire. One day he explained it to me. "Gandhi believes," he said, "that before he can do anything for India, he must live the life of its common people. You and I have always worn a suit, but there are millions you've never seen, who

have little to wear. The people are poor, even though the land is rich."

"Why is that?"

"There are a lot of reasons. You are too young to understand."

"But why can't Gandhi wear a suit just because other people are poor?"

We were driving in a carriage along the waterfront that day. It was evening. The sun was dipping into the water in the distance.

"Look over there," my father said.

I looked and saw a dark silhouette move along the pebbled beach. A man, I judged from his nakedness, for his body was bare up to his girdled loins. He was short, twisted, almost deformed. His form was bent as if under a burden, even though he was carrying nothing on his back.

"There are millions like that man all over India. They are poor, very poor. Gandhi wants to be like them, to live their lives, feel their feelings and think their thoughts. Then the people will more readily believe in him."

Day by day, I learned more about Gandhi. He was the son of a *dewan*. His father was the chief minister of the ruling prince of Rajkot, an Indian state.

In Rajkot, Gandhi was born. It was on the second day of October, 1869. Gandhi's father had been married four times. Thrice he lost his wives. His last, Putlibai, survived him. She bore her husband a daughter and three sons. Gandhi was their last child. The destiny of the four hundred million people of India was to be linked with that child, Mohandas. That was his first name. Karamchand was the name of his father. Gandhi was their family name.

The Indian states of Gandhi's childhood were like the duchies of pre-1914 Central Europe, steeped in an atmosphere of perpetual intrigue. They retained the old theories of despotic government and their rulers exercised absolute sovereignty over their subjects. The royal courts of these states retained their mediaeval splendor, the people bowing low to their ruling prince and retiring from his presence without turning their back on him. Such was the environment in which Gandhi was born.

As one looked into his youth one found nothing outstanding. At school he was mediocre. Mathematics worried him. His spelling was bad. His handwriting was shabby and showed signs of neglect. He read no other books than those prescribed for his work. There was nothing in his youth that stamped him as being of any great promise. He had led the aimless life of a young and spoiled son of a chief minister of an Indian state.

The petty monarchies of India, which existed under the benediction of the British rule, had no high principles for their subjects to follow. They were the embodiment of an unstable and somewhat precarious power which in each case had fallen into the hands of a few individuals who rallied around one central figure, the ruling prince.

There was, however, a marked religious influence on the young Gandhi. He was brought up in the rigid Jain school of Hinduism according to which the taking of the life of any living creature was a major sin. Naturally meat-eating was forbidden.

As a youngster, Gandhi was said to have sat with his legs crossed, reciting verses from the sacred book of the Hindus, the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The *Gita* had a suggestion of the cadence of the Testament. This early influence

left a mark on him, for it was to this same *Bhagavad-Gita* he turned for comfort on many occasions in his checkered career.

Gandhi was married early, at the age of thirteen, to a girl who was even younger. She was chosen for him by his parents. Marriage in those days was a slaughter of innocents. His brother, his cousin and Gandhi himself were married on the same fateful day for the sake of convenience and on grounds of economy. Gandhi said later that marriage at so young an age became nothing more than "the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum-beating, marriage processions, rich dinners and a strange girl to play with."

"What is his wife's name?" Maiji asked my mother one day.

"Kasturba," my mother replied.

"Everyone was married very young in those days," Maiji said. "Children used to be promised in marriage by their parents at the age of two and three."

"You didn't get me very young," my mother said. "I was twenty-six, wasn't I?"

"My dear Homai, you were of the new generation. You married for love. Everyone marries for love nowadays."

"What is wrong with that?"

"There are a lot of divorces which we never had," Maiji retorted. "You know I don't approve of divorce."

Looking over his evening paper, grandfather playfully said, "I think divorce is a good thing, sometimes. I'd have got a divorce long ago if I wasn't such a good-hearted man."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Jehangir, saying such a thing, even in fun," Maiji replied.

Everyone else laughed, but Maiji felt a little hurt. To her, marriage was not a thing to be made fun of.

As in our house, so in many others, Gandhi was often the topic of conversation. One learned that he was an educated man. He had been to England. He was a barrister-at-law.

Little stories began to be told about Gandhi. When he first arrived in England, he had got off the ship in a white flannel suit. The navvies of Southampton were a little shaken at the optimism of a dark stranger who appeared in their midst wearing summer clothes on a winter's day. At the pier he met an Indian friend waiting to receive him, and in the excitement of having arrived in England, Gandhi picked up his friend's top hat and brushed it the wrong way.

When my grandfather heard this story he did not laugh. Charitably he said, "How can you expect a youngster, brought up in an orthodox Indian home, to know on his first arrival in England how to brush a top hat and what was the right thing to wear?"

While clothes, style and fashion appealed to Gandhi in his London days, they became unimportant in his later life. He wore less and less after he returned to India till one saw him in his diaper with a shawl over his bare shoulders. He also moved towards simplicity of living. The shroud in which his soul was wrapped began to loosen its folds.

It was easy to caricature him. His attire was scanty, his ears were large, his mouth unsensuous, his body frail and emaciated. Yet to those who knew India, Gandhi was no caricature. India was so like him, half-naked, frail and emaciated.

But there were other things about him at which people did not laugh. He had ideas which stirred their

imagination. The soul of a nation can resist a million armed men, he once said. Without arms one can still fight oppression if only with body, mind and soul.

These were new ideas. This also was a new language.

Gandhi had evolved a new political concept called *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* came from two Sanskrit words: *satya* which meant truth and *agraha* which meant anger. The literal translation of *satyagraha* is "righteous indignation," but because of the several movements of *satyagraha* it has come to stand for the feeling of indignation as well as for the particular nonviolent form of expressing that "righteous indignation." At first there was much confusion about the meanings of *satyagraha*, nonviolence and passive resistance. People were inclined to use all three terms indiscriminately without differentiating between them. *Satyagraha*, however, was not only quiet but conscious and deliberate suffering, brought upon oneself of one's own free will.

Satyagraha was based on nonviolence. It was the application of nonviolence to the political struggle.

There was often a great disparity between the ideal and the actual achievement. Often the average man was not able to resist the primitive urge to resort to violence. But, however often nonviolence may have failed in practice, it remained the ideal of Gandhi's political philosophy. He called it the breath of his life.

To many people Gandhi was a destructive force. Others, with a glint in their eyes, said that one has to destroy in order to rebuild. They believed that out of this unrest would come the awakening of the nation.

One day a friend of the family came to our house. He was speaking of recent happenings in India and of the challenge which Gandhi had offered to authority in

various parts of the country. Sitting at my grandfather's feet, I listened to the conversation.

"Jehangir, do you know what humiliation this man has known?"

My grandfather did not answer.

"I'll tell you," he said. "In South Africa, where he went on his return from England, he was shamefully treated. He was thrown out of railway carriages. He was made to sit at a coachman's feet. In South Africa they do not allow Indians to sit inside the coach. He was called a 'coolie' as Indians are termed over there. He was beaten because one day he happened to walk on the same side of the pavement as a South African guard. It happened just outside President Kruger's house."

"That's very wrong," Maiji said with her clear-cut sense of right and wrong. She added, "But the correct thing to do in such cases is to proceed in a court of law. That is the way to get justice."

The visitor, who wore a Gandhi cap, the first I had seen, said, "In court he would have lost. Justice doesn't descend from the heavens. The meek never inherit the earth. One must stand up and fight. This man is giving us the strength to fight."

"But Gandhi says we should offer only passive resistance," Maiji argued.

"It is passive in the sense that retaliation should be without violence. But it is an active, aggressive, moral force. If we try to fight back with sticks and brickbats, which is all we have, we will be crushed. The resistance we offer must come from within us. It must be resistance of the mind. That has great force."

"It always ends in riots and violence," Maiji said.

"That is because the people are not trained. How

can you expect an understanding of the subtler values from the masses of India? There is so little education here."

There was a pause, after which he added, "The idea of Gandhi is good. It is taking root in the minds of our thinking people. That is its value. The masses only set the stage for the demonstration. It is the moral resistance of thinking people which tells. Gandhi is trying to link this resistance of thinking people with mass demonstrations. Then *satyagraha* will have its full effect."

Maiji confessed she did not understand all that. "All I know is that after tomorrow the bazaars are going to close," she said, "and I have to lay in food for two or three days."

"At least it makes you think about the struggle. But if your lives were normal and undisturbed, you would not bother."

"Maybe," Maiji replied. "Politics are not for me. I admit it was wrong that they treated him so badly in South Africa. I did not know about it."

"No one knows the number of similar cases in which our people have been humiliated. No one cares. But one day you'll see a change. Often out of humiliation strength is born."

Many other people spoke in the same spirit. What they said has always been in the back of my mind although many of the details I have now forgotten. But the spirit of these conversations I can still remember as an indication of the new way of thinking which had crept into our lives. I was conscious, even at that young age, that a change was taking place around us.

Some of us wanted to move with it, others were on

the defense, preferring to stay on the side of safety and security. Time decided which way people like my father should turn. Time was needed for the judgment of man.

There was at that time only one organized political party of any consequence in India—the Indian National Congress. It was more commonly referred to as “the Congress.” An Englishman named Hume first suggested the idea of Indian leaders coming together once a year to discuss “social matters.” That was the innocent beginning from which sprang this turbulent body of political opinion.

Its story is best told in a few lines to be found on a tablet in the modest, unassuming, almost shabby Gokuldas Tejpal Hall in Bombay, which reads: “In this historic hall on the 28th December, 1885, a band of gallant patriots laid the foundation of the Indian National Congress, which during these 50 years has been built up, stone by stone, tier by tier, by the faith and devotion, courage and sacrifice of countless men and women, as the pledge and symbol of their invincible purpose to secure for India, their motherland, her legitimate birth-right of *Swaraj*.”

The early attitude of the Congress was, however, one of prayerfulness. It was in keeping with the India of that time, when Indians wore turbans and were content to make long speeches in which they “humbly prayed.” Indian political thinking was in the main amateurish. It floundered. It showed signs of diffidence and doubt.

With the years, as the Congress gained on the affections of the people, it became self-conscious and assertive. It extended its organization to plan campaigns of education and propaganda. Much later, under Gandhi, it thought and spoke in terms of direct action. The

evolution of the Congress was in fact the evolution of our early political thought.

Before Gandhi came on the Indian scene, the Congress had already produced a few outstanding figures. There was Dadabhai Naoroji, who became a member of the British House of Commons. There were Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, G. K. Gokhale and Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

If some of these names were not known outside India, it was only because India too was unknown. Naoroji, Mehta, Gokhale and Tilak were landmarks in our struggle for freedom. They paved the way for Gandhi.

In the India in which I was born, the Congress had already been established for a quarter of a century. It was not discouraged by the British in power, because there was nothing in the Congress attitude to discourage. The Congress only made speeches and passed resolutions. There was no talk of direct action then, nonviolent or otherwise. The Congress was a body of kindly Indian gentlemen, who spent their lives appealing to the liberality of their rulers to allow them a share in the government of their country. The British responded to these appeals with equal verbosity. Politics then were like cricket matches on the village lawn, a gentlemen's sport.

The complexion of the Congress changed somewhat when in April, 1917, the peasants of Champaran asked the Congress to support their cause. It was the beginning of the long and gruelling battle with the British *raj*.

Champaran was a comparatively unknown district, northwest of the province of Bihar. Bihar itself is towards the east of India, close to Bengal. About a hundred years ago there came to Champaran a host of indigo planters, who gradually got a hold on the peasantry and forced them to grow indigo, though this was

not profitable to the peasants. Other cultivation suffered in consequence. The wages from indigo cultivation were nominal. Occasionally the peasants rebelled against this compulsion but all such risings had been severely crushed.

With the coming on the market of synthetic dyes the cultivation of indigo became almost valueless. The planters closed down their factories, for they had suffered heavy losses. They now attempted to shift these losses onto the peasant by compelling him to execute a new lease, the terms of which were inequitable. The planters wanted a compulsory enhancement of the peasant's rent at a time when cultivation was valueless. The peasants protested, but the interests of the planters were so well protected by the government that the peasants could not seek any judicial remedy. The planters were in a position to damage the property and the person of the peasant. The law was unwilling to intervene.

Gandhi was at that time a newcomer to the Congress. He was feeling his way in India after his early experiments with *satyagraha* in South Africa. Because of the similarity of the complaint of the Champaran peasants to that of the indentured laborers of South Africa, Gandhi volunteered to go there and report on the affair to the Congress.

Before going to Champaran, Gandhi had intended to stay there a day or two and view the situation. He had included Champaran in a tour of the east of India which embraced Calcutta, Patna and other places. When he got as near to it as Patna, he realized that the work in Champaran "might take even two years." He was prepared, if necessary, to give it that time.

He collected his co-workers around him and set out towards Champaran. His reception at the hands of the

authorities was far from cordial. Firmly but politely he was advised to leave the district. He carried on. On the way he was served with a government order telling him to refrain from going farther and to leave the district. He disregarded this order. He was, therefore, summoned to appear in court the next day before a magistrate and stand his trial for disobeying a government order.

The news of his trial spread rapidly through the district. No one before him had ever disobeyed a government order. In court he shamefacedly pleaded guilty. It took the government prosecuting attorney by surprise.

Not content with having upset all the calculations of the prosecution, Gandhi made his first statement in an Indian court. He gave his reasons for disobeying the order. He said, "I have disregarded the order served upon me, not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the law of our being, the voice of conscience."

The magistrate became a trifle perplexed. He cleared his throat in the orthodox legal fashion. To his one-track legal mind the question was one of jurisdiction. Could a case based on the law of God be tried in his court at Champaran?

Faced with this dilemma he postponed judgment.

Next day he announced in court, "His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor of Bihar has ordered that the case be withdrawn."

It all happened quickly. No one realized its significance at the time.

A year later came the incident at Kaira.

Kaira was a district in the province of Gujarat, near

Bombay. At Kaira there was an unexpected shortage of crops. It was the unwritten rule of revenue assessment that when the crop did not come up to a quarter of the full harvest, the rent payable to government was suspended for the year. The dispute at Kaira was about the quantity of the crop. The government alleged the crop was above the quarter mark. The peasants claimed it was not. Once again Gandhi was on the scene and again it was he who triumphed.

But Kaira had a massive, moral significance. It was the first rural and mass challenge to authority. For the first time the peasant had dared to question the government's assessment of the quantity of the crop. Hitherto, the government's decision was always final and irrevocable. The peasant could only represent his case by petition but that seldom achieved any results. The government would promise to look into it more carefully the next time but that was all. The particular assessment would stand. The peasant had to pay his rent or quit.

To understand how important these seemingly insignificant incidents were to India one has to bear in mind that India lives chiefly on the land. To the majority of the 400,000,000 the land is a religion. It means food, clothing and security. Even God dare not come to the poor, Gandhi once said, except in the shape of bread. To village-India the land is both God and bread. To work on the land was to work in the service of God. To pay rents and taxes, as have been paid for centuries, was as sacred a rite as going to the temple or the mosque.

The villages of India once lived a peaceful, placid life. The affairs of the big cities had never been their concern. The people of the village were like one family,

graded in order of prosperity, living on the land. They were concerned with elemental things—a sufficiency of rain, a plentiful harvest and the prices which their corn, wheat and mustard would fetch.

Now and again there was a death in the village. Now and again a child was born. It had gone on like this for generations with the land as the one incontrovertible fact around which their lives revolved. Men, women and children were like the crops, which grew and were gathered. As there were new crops, so there were new men, new women and new children. It was all part of the normal phenomenon of nature. Nature had never forsaken the people. For this they offered prayers at sunrise, and again, when the sun set, there would be thanksgiving for the bountifulness of the Lord.

In the village, the time was measured not by months and dates but by seasons. There was the summer, the rains and then the cool winter months that followed. There was an expectancy about all life which was certain to fulfill itself. When the summer months drew to a close and the land became parched and thirsted for rain, and the rivers ran low and the streams by the hillside dried up, there was still no cause for alarm. The villagers believed that as certain as the night followed the day, so would the clouds gather, making the sky appear dark and foreboding. There would be flashes of lightning and the thunder would peal angrily and loud and rain would fall, breaking into torrents that streamed down the hill and made the rivers swollen and turgid once again.

The Lord would answer the people's prayer, the villagers believed. But whether He answered their prayer or not, the tax had always to be paid. The government could never be questioned, for the government was the

mightiest of all. It listened to no prayers. It answered none.

Kaira, therefore, was spectacular and symbolic. It was the first cry of the masses. At Kaira the old methods of negotiation were discarded. There were no chosen representatives of the peasants running around the outbuildings of the administration in the hope of securing an interview with an obscure Englishman, who was called by the high-sounding name of third secretary to government. There were no humble submissions and petitions from the peasants of Kaira. The retort of Kaira was emphatic. The peasants refused to pay the taxes. They did not dread confiscation of their lands. They were not afraid of going to prison. Something had happened to change these once timid village people. A new faith had come to them, for they had succeeded.

In the years that passed, many Indians began to review their way of living and thinking. The changes which followed were reflected in different ways. Some discarded their English suits and took to wearing *khaddar* which was homespun. Others remained outwardly the same but began to feel a bitterness inside. In our family there was no change of clothes. A change of heart, however, was clearly noticeable.

My father accepted the idea that, for the poor, the Gandhi cap was good to wear. It was cheap. It was, he said with reserve, easy to wash and clean to wear. But my father did not wear a Gandhi cap, nor did anyone else in our house.

My mother still wore her beautiful *saris*. They were of georgette, chiffon, French and Japanese silk. The borders on them were of fine embroidery or, for the evenings, of silver and gold.

She was always chastely dressed. Unlike other In-

dian women she was never laden with jewelry. In the evenings she would sometimes wear her pearl necklace if the color of her *sari* was dark. With pastel shades, at more formal functions, she sometimes wore a necklace. But that was all. Many other Indian women wore heavy jewelry all the time.

My mother had a weakness for good perfume. My father would buy her a large bottle of Guerlain on her birthday and another on the Parsi New Year.

But gradually into our house, which had hitherto been partial to foreign goods, there came cloth of the Indian mills. The new bed sheets were not at first so smooth to the touch but with washing they became softer, as my mother had said.

There was a family scene one day when mother bought a dozen pieces of Indian shirting for my father.

"For goodness' sake, let me at least buy my own shirts," he complained. "These just don't look the same. They don't feel the same."

"Now what's wrong with them? They can be made up the same way. Besides, they are much cheaper," mother observed.

"I shall not wear them. Give them away."

Mother had the shirts made. Weeks later father wore one in the house on a Sunday, almost under protest. He wore one more on another day till he got used to the idea and then he wore them all the time.

"They are quite all right once they are washed," he said at breakfast one morning.

"I know," my mother replied coldly.

There were many houses like ours which began to buy Indian goods. It was now a fashionable thing to do, for fashion was nothing more than the mass adoption of an ordinary idea.

The effect of this was not readily discernible to the average man. But my father remarked, "I find the imports of British goods appreciably down." He was in a position to judge for he was a customs official.

I recall this little incident vividly. I could hardly have understood its real importance at the time it happened. Only now do I realize that around that casual domestic scene was entwined the political warp of India, for the boycott of foreign goods, particularly of cloth, was to be one of the principal planks of the non-cooperation movement. Similarly there were other incidents, the significance of which I was too young to understand but which unfolded their meaning in course of time.

There was the dire story of the massacre at Amritsar, which rather than an isolated political incident must now be regarded as a turning point in our history.

I remember the day I was first told that grim story, years after it happened, because it was a story which every Indian parent should tell his child.

Amritsar was a large town in the northern province of the Punjab. The Punjab was the recruiting ground for the British-controlled army in India. The men of the North were born fighters, easy to train. They had a tradition as fighting men. Race, diet and climate combined to make them hardy. They were chiefly Moslems, tough and double-boned.

At the time of the massacre there were two Englishmen in the Punjab whose names were strangely similar. The one was Sir Michael O'Dwyer, lieutenant-governor of the province. He was knighted as governors always are. The other was General Reginald E. H. Dyer, who commanded the North.

It was the custom of the Congress to meet in differ-

ent parts of the country. That year it decided to hold its annual meeting in Amritsar. Two local leaders, Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, a lawyer and a doctor respectively, were entrusted with the arrangements.

The governor and the general did not want their province polluted by politics. They smelled trouble if the Congress had access to the martial races. They were aware of activities of the Congress in other parts of the country. There had been disturbances everywhere and riots had broken out in many places. Law and order had suffered. The police had clashed with the people. Troops had often been called out.

The governor, therefore, decided to nip the Congress idea in the bud. He ordered the district magistrate of Amritsar to send for the doctor and the lawyer, have them arrested and remove them to an unknown destination, so that arrangements for the meeting would be completely upset.

But O'Dwyer made one mistake. He underestimated the influence of Gandhi and the Congress. He also misjudged the mood of the people.

Hearing of the inexplicable disappearance of the lawyer and the doctor, large numbers of people collected in a public square and decided to march to the magistrate's house.

The district magistrate of Amritsar lived away from the city and the bazaars. A railway level crossing was the line of demarcation between the cantonment where he lived and the rest of the city.

As the crowd approached the crossing shouting the names of the lost men, the magistrate grew somewhat unnerved. He knew they were not coming to pay him a social call and he was afraid of what he had done. The people though unarmed were a frenzied crowd. Their

voices, which he could already hear, rose with passion. He had never known them to behave like this before. For the first time his authority was being challenged. He therefore ordered the guard at the level crossing not to allow the people to pass. "Not under any circumstances," he stated emphatically.

That was his order.

The crowd reached the level crossing. Like a mad people they shouted, their voices straining to shout louder. Then a hushed silence fell, for the guard had fired. The voice of authority had spoken.

There were several wounded. Two were killed.

The people did not venture beyond the level crossing. They gathered their dead and wounded and carried them back to the city.

But their anger rose. They thirsted for revenge. On their return to the city they laid hands on the first Englishman they found and killed him. It was a brutal, ghastly murder, an outlet for their revenge. Five other Englishmen were picked up at random and killed.

By evening the people had become mad. They set fire to buildings. They burned a bank and a railway shed. In the confusion that reigned, an Englishwoman, Miss Sherwood, was knocked off her bicycle.

General Dyer proclaimed martial law in Amritsar the next day. Processions were banned. A curfew was enforced. No more than two persons were permitted on the sidewalks in the day and after dusk no one was allowed out. Gas and electricity were cut off, leaving the town in complete darkness.

A public platform was erected for whipping.

"Whipping?" Maiji asked, as without murmur she listened to the story of Amritsar that day. "You mean whipping the people?"

The man who was telling the story nodded his head.

"That was very wrong," Maiji said, but she didn't suggest that the whipped should seek redress in a court.

But the general had done more than that. If any Indian wanted to cross the lane in which Miss Sherwood had been knocked down from her bicycle, he had to crawl on his hands and knees. It was known as Dyer's Crawling Order.

There followed the incident at Jallianwala Baug. *Baug* is the Indian word for garden. Jallianwala Baug was really an enclosed public square.

Here, the next day, which was Hindu New Year's Day, many hundreds of people had gathered, disregarding the official ban on public meetings. They were, however, peaceful townspeople, harmless and unarmed, including women and children.

Enraged at the defiance of his order, General Dyer came to the *baug* with an armored car and troops. The passage to the *baug* would not admit the armored car, so the general left it outside. The troops took their stand on an elevated platform in the *baug* and within two or three minutes of his arrival, he gave the order to fire.

Sixteen hundred rounds were fired from that vantage point on 20,000 unarmed people. The firing stopped only when the ammunition ran out. The casualties according to the official figure totaled 400 dead. The wounded were counted between a thousand and two.

The general showed no mercy. He left the dead and the wounded in the *baug* all night. He denied them medical attention. There was not a drop of water to be had.

Amritsar was the starting point of the struggle for

freedom. It dramatized or crystallized in a concentrated form the idea that Indians were not free. If 20,000 Indians gathered in a place for however innocent a purpose and a handful of Englishmen did not approve of it, the Indians could be shot down, for they had no power to retaliate.

The governor of the Punjab officially approved of the general's action and the British Parliament passed an act of indemnity to give protection to the general from the consequences of the law. This attitude of the rulers placed Amritsar in its proper perspective. The velvet glove was off. The mailed fist was seen in all its naked ruthlessness. Behind the action of individuals was the British *raj*, for the preservation of whose prestige our men and women had been shot in cold blood.

Later, out of a belated sense of decency, a commission was appointed "to inquire into" the incident at Jallianwala Bagh. It was a royal commission appointed by the Crown. Englishmen sat on it.

It was at this inquiry that an English judge, Mr. Justice Rankin, asked General Dyer: "Excuse me putting it in this way, General, but was it not a form of frightfulness?"

The general replied, "No, it was not. It was a horrible duty I had to perform. I think it was a merciful thing. I thought that I should shoot well and shoot strong, so that I, or anybody else, should not have to shoot again. I think it quite possible I could have dispersed the crowd without firing, but they would have come back again and I should have made what I consider to be a fool of myself."

He added, "I wanted to crush the morale of that people."

General Dyer was relieved of his command. The

British said that for a true soldier, it was the greatest shame.

The Indians said nothing. They merely wept for their dead.

The unrest in India grew. It swept like a storm over the country. Gandhi had touched the Indian's heart. The movement of civil disobedience which he launched in 1921 gathered momentum.

In the early stages of the movement the Moslems were solidly behind Gandhi, for Britain had enraged the Moslems by breaking the pledge about Turkey and by depriving the Sultan of Turkey of the Holy Land. Turkey had fought on the wrong side in World War I and the Indian Moslem soldiers who fought for the British were reluctant to fight their own brethren in an imperialist Christian war. David Lloyd George, then Prime Minister of England, had assured the Moslems of India that the campaign against Turkey had been necessitated only by military strategy and that there was no desire to encroach upon the Sultan's Holy Land. When the war was over the victors split the Asiatic portion of Turkey between them, and the Sultan of Turkey, the religious head of the Moslems, was nothing better than a prisoner of the British. The Holy Land was gone.

The Moslem movement which started in India to agitate against this breach of faith by the British was called the Khilafat movement. The question of the Holy Land was a concrete issue which the Moslem understood better than he did abstract issues, like democracy and freedom.

Gandhi was quick to see the opportunity which the situation offered. He joined the two issues, the political

and the religious, and of the two he made a common cause. Out of this fusion a united India was born. Unity became a reality even though freedom was yet to come.

In the years that followed 1921 there were several movements of civil disobedience. They were mass movements embracing all manner of people. There were also various forms which civil disobedience took. In main, it implied the deliberate disobedience of all governmental authority, civil and military. It implied the surrender of titles and honorary offices, resignation from civic bodies, refusal to attend government functions, withdrawal of children from schools and colleges controlled by the government, boycott of British courts of law by lawyers and litigants, refusal to offer oneself for military or government service, boycott of foreign goods, chiefly British; in fact, it implied the doing of everything which hindered the normal work of the government established by the British.

For everything that was destructive in the movement, there was a constructive aspect to it also. The idea behind the boycott of British cloth was primarily to hit the Lancashire textile industry and strike at Britain's prosperity. The British sat up and took notice of the happenings in India when the smoke of the mills of Lancashire grew thin, when their unemployment figures rose and when the bread queues in the industrial north grew longer.

On the constructive side, there was a desire to revive the industries and the crafts of the country. The cult of *swadeshi* and *khaddar* taught the Indian to wear the homemade and hand-spun cloth of his own country. Gandhi had earlier defined *swadeshi* as "the spirit within us, which restricts us to the use and the service of our

immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote."

There was, therefore, more in the idea of *swadeshi* than mere political advantage. It made the Indian more Indian-minded, conscious of the struggle between him and his rulers. *Swadeshi* became the symbol of the oppressed, the symbol of liberation.

There was also an economic aspect to it which could not be easily ignored. For half the year, because of climatic conditions, the agricultural laborer found it difficult to earn a living. Spinning *khaddar* became a means of relieving the enforced idleness of months. It became a new source of income, however small. Some said it was an exaggeration to regard the spinning of a little *khaddar* as a means of relieving the economic distress of the country. The profits out of spinning *khaddar* were negligible. But in the poverty of India with its abnormally low wage-earning capacity and the poor living conditions of its people, a few rupees a year made a great difference.

There were other reasons why hand spinning was pre-eminently suited to India. *Khaddar* did not require any capital or costly implements to put it into operation. The spinning wheel cost less than a dollar and yarn was almost negligible in price. To spin *khaddar* required little talent or specialized skill. It asked for no physical exertion. Yet, next to food, it had universal and permanent value. It found for itself a ready market and produced the required income. No one could object to it on any religious or social grounds. It did not interfere with caste, creed or religion. In a country of 700,000 villages, the minutest improvement in village life collectively became a gain which could not be ignored.

Therefore, the movements which Gandhi launched were not merely emotional, even though emotion was the spark which lit many a political fire. More than once did Gandhi and the Congress leaders, which in the early stages of the struggle included many Moslems, go to jail. Prison became a normal feature of our political life as unrest, agitation and disobedience of authority became more frequent. The pulse of India beat. Often feelings were strong and their expression loud. Sometimes there were periods of quiet and gloom as

After tempest, calm assuaged
All the wounded boughs of night.

But the undercurrent of resistance remained, tinged with bitterness which our people felt.

In that same year, 1921, there came to India Edward, Prince of Wales, now Duke of Windsor. He brought a royal message of good will for the Indian people. He had brought it too late, for India no longer believed in the word of Britain or in the sincerity of its friendly messages.

I remember his arriving in Calcutta where we lived at the time. Our apartment faced the entrance to Government House, the stately residence of the king's representative, with its spacious gardens, tall iron gates on which the crown was painted in gold, high walls, and an armed guard outside.

From the balcony of our house I could get a clear view of the procession as on that bright Indian morning the prince arrived. A black, highly polished Rolls-Royce came up majestically along Old Court House Street with a little Union Jack whipping from its radiator cap. The long line of troops stood rigidly at attention. All the pomp and ceremony of the empire,

over which, it was said, the sun never set, was to be seen in abundance in honor of the heir-apparent to the English throne. Union Jacks flew over the government buildings and over the British houses of commerce and trade. There was cheering from some of the people, but in comparison to other such state occasions, the crowds were thinner and the cheering feebler than before. The shops of Calcutta were closed that day, but not as on days of festival and rejoicing. It was *satyagraha* in action.

The police clashed with large crowds which were rioting in the streets, and the military had to be called out to preserve law and order. Wherever the prince went the reception given to him was most hostile. It was not difficult to see that a change had come over the people in their attitude towards the British *raj*. The Englishman in India and his authority no longer appeared a frightening sight. He did not strike terror in the people's hearts. The little white gods had lost their one-time worshippers. The spirit of resistance to authority had got into the blood of the people. One could see it in the expression of their faces. Heads which had long been bowed were held high. Many had taken their beating like men and showed with pride the bruises which felt tender and sore. Thousands were behind bars. Freedom itself was in chains.

New strength had come to the people. In Delhi a *swami*, a holy man, had bared his breast and to the military squad, which threatened to shoot him, said, "Go on, fire!" Women who had never unveiled their faces came out of *purdah* and walked at the head of processions banned by the government. They took their beatings like the men.

At the end of 1921, when I was ten years old, Gandhi

was a name honored in many an Indian home. Into the chaos of our uneventful lives he had brought a sense of cohesion.

He had unified a nation of 400,000,000.

He had hoisted a national flag where only the Union Jack had flown before.

He had decreed that home-spun should be the only garment worn.

He had evolved a cap which millions wore.

He had shattered the smug complacency of the British *raj*.

He had found a place for himself in the hearts of the people.

He had shown the government the power that was behind him.

He had created a permanent spirit of resistance towards the British in India.

His word was law in India. Out of dust he made us men.

An English padre, the Reverend J. H. Holmes, said, "This man holds absolutely in his hands today the destinies of his people. When Gandhi speaks, it is India that speaks. When Gandhi acts, it is India that acts. When Gandhi is arrested, it is India that is outraged and humiliated. More truly, I believe, than any other man who has ever lived, this great Indian is the incarnation of a people's soul."

And that was so.

4

It was now May, 1930, and for the first time I left my home. Oxford was my destination. It was a few months after grandfather's death and the joy of leaving was somewhat marred by the mourning in our family. Even so, the idea of going to Oxford, home of lost causes and forsaken beliefs, as Matthew Arnold had called it, was no small thrill. When my father wished me goodbye he said, "From now you'll be on your own. Do well for yourself and your people. It will be quite a new experience for you. You are going to a new world. See it, live its life, imbibe what it has to give, but always retain what you already have, your heritage."

I went to Oxford as an Indian. Lincoln was my college. I was its only Indian student for the year.

I felt a sense of importance as I walked into the porter's lodge the first day of term in my gray flannel bags and my beige tweed coat, all beautifully new, well cut and pressed. Later I learned that it was more in fashion at the university to have no crease on one's trousers and to wear a threadbare sports jacket, patched with leather elbows.

A bundle of letters awaited me that first day. There were notices and catalogues from local traders, letters from home and from friends.

I went through the whole pile carefully.

Among these letters was one in an unfamiliar female hand. The stamp showed an Oxford postmark. The letter was short and to the point.

Dear Mr. Karaka,

I understand you come from India. Have you a copy of the Bible? If not, can I send you one?

Yours sincerely,

I showed it to Chambers, the porter at Lincoln College. He was once a sergeant in the army and had been to India.

"Pay no attention to her," he said. "She does it every year."

"Who is she?" I asked.

"Some old girl," he replied. "I seen her. She's got no chest and her face is like the back end of a cow. Missionary work they calls it. Heducating them 'eathens. You're a 'eathen, sir, if you pardon me saying so. She'll tell you all about caste and cows and tell you what you should do. She's done it year after year. Makes me sick. I've been to India. Fought in the last war. Any time anyone acts funny with you, you just puttem in their place, see what I mean? Tell 'em to mind their own bloody business, see what I mean? Be stronglike. All the Indians we've had here were strong. This is Oxford. This is where heducation is."

That was my first lecture at Oxford. I liked it. Chambers was a fine man. Hard-faced, he had a heart of gold. He used to lend me money when I was broke!

I was sent to England to study law and compete for the Indian Civil Service. My father had long ago decided he wanted me to follow the family tradition, to serve the government and "help to shape the destiny of our people." There was security in it, he used to say.

In his letters to me he never let me forget that the Civil Service was my prime concern. On one occasion he wrote, "Even if things change in India, there will

always be need for administrators in the country. There'll be, in the future, more chances for Indians than there are now. In the I.C.S. there will be nothing to which you cannot rise. You may even become the governor of a province."

I remember, too, my father writing to me on my birthday. In the middle of his greetings there was a sort of genealogical tree, from which I could see at a glance all the titles and the achievements of my ancestors. He wrote:

Let me remind you of the stock you come from. You are descended from men who have distinguished themselves. They've done solid work. There are still landmarks of your forefathers around. There is the statue of Maiji's father in our town. There is the bust of your grandfather's father in the City Hall. There are the impressive buildings which your mother's grandfather built. That is the foundation on which you stand. On it you must build, brick by brick. Whatever may be your youthful feelings, remember, "Freedom slowly broadens down from precedent to precedent."

Reading the letters my father wrote to me I often felt there was a generation missing between us, even though our relationship was that of father and son. The reason was that India was changing too fast.

Soon I became more Oxford than Indian. I liked the musty smell of my Gothic surroundings. I liked the freshness of youth in the midst of which I lived. I liked the aura of that cathedral city. The spires began to have some meaning for me. From the cloistered towers there echoed the enchantment of a hallowed past.

There was culture in Oxford. There was so much learning. There was all the richness of civilization for a young man to imbibe. One took what one wanted.

The rest one left behind. There was so much around: classics, political science, law, medicine, music, literature, art, science, history, both ancient and contemporary. How much of it could one man take?

Undergraduate Oxford had a few inhibitions. Its youth was one of them. It adopted a defensive attitude to age and its shibboleths. Youth sat back in critical judgment over many senior men. It applauded with reserve and condescension. Often it was barely polite. Oxford had a delightful grown-up pose.

Oxford gave me convictions of my own. They were not always correct. I changed them when I found I was wrong, for the basic law of life is to change. I learned from Oxford because I was willing to learn. I steeped myself in English undergraduate life without ever losing my identity. I went to the Oxford Union, which was the undergraduate debating society unlike any other in the world, but I also went to the Indian Majlis where the Indians debated, though not so seriously. I heard the great men of our time who visited the university. I heard George Lansbury, the Grand Old Man of the British Labor Party. I heard Duff Cooper, the blue-eyed, blue-blooded Tory, who later became the British ambassador to France. I heard Churchill in the days of his unpopularity. I heard Lloyd George, Chesterton and many others. I also heard Gandhi.

I was proud to be an Indian the day Gandhi came to Oxford. The hall in which he spoke to us was full. When he walked in, the assembly got up as a mark of respect. It kept standing till Gandhi sat down. I had never seen it happen in Oxford before. I never saw it happen again.

At Oxford I had one great ambition. It was to become president of the Union. No Indian had ever been

its president. Many had tried but no one had succeeded. I wondered whether I would get a chance to sit in that historic chair, with which had been associated a galaxy of English names—Gladstone, Salisbury, Birkenhead, John Simon, Cecil and others. My Indian name sounded odd in that roll. But at the end of my tenth term the Oxford Union had its first Indian president.

There were, however, occasions when England was not so gracious to those who came from my country or who were of my race. For my first Christmas vacation I planned, with an Indian friend, a trip to Switzerland. We had to work carefully within a student budget. I looked through the advertisements of conducted tours till I found one which suited us. I wrote to the travel agency and booked our accommodation.

A day before we were to leave I called at the travel bureau for my tickets. They asked for my passport. I produced it. They started shuffling it among themselves, eyeing me almost with suspicion.

Then a large, horsey English matron came to me. She looked me over and said, "I think you'll pass off as a Spaniard. But will your friend?"

"I don't understand," I said. "I think there must be some mistake. I am an Indian."

"That is the point," she said tersely.

Then I understood.

I was nineteen. I thought I was smart. I knew a little law. I tried to appear self-possessed and said, "Do you know, there are penalties for breach of contract?"

"I see you've studied law," she said.

"Yes," I said confidently.

"You'll make a bad lawyer. You don't read what you sign."

She produced the conditions on which the contract was drawn. There was a page full. The relevant clause read, "Further, we reserve the right to cancel a contract with anyone other than a person belonging to a pure white race."

The shock was bad. I stood and sweated.

"I was trying to be helpful," she added, almost kindly. I took my passport meekly. I left.

But we went to Switzerland all the same. We went to the same resort, even the same hotel. Another British travel agency got the same rooms for us. I told the old man who attended us at this other agency about my experience, partly to get it off my chest, partly also out of self-defense.

"What are you worried about?" he said. "You've got the same rooms. What's more, I'll give you a slight discount."

That brought the first smile to my face.

"I am also English," he said. "We are not all bastards, you know. Lots are. Some don't like the Jews, some don't like the Chinese, some don't like the Russians and some don't like . . ."

"... the Indians," I concluded.

"That's how it is," he said. "Let's face the facts."

"It's all very well. The point is that nothing can be done about it."

"You never know," he replied, sounding ominous as if he had second sense. Perhaps I was in a mood to interpret it that way.

"Happy Christmas to you. Have a good time and let the anti-Indians rot. But, my dear sir, don't spoil your holiday for that."

So we went to Switzerland and had an enjoyable time. A few days after we arrived at the hotel we were

made to feel we owned the place. We skied and lugged by day and danced through the night. We decided what tunes the band should play.

One day we saw the conductor of the pure-white tour. He was sitting alone at the bar, his hand on his head. He was making a living the hard way because of the brains he didn't have.

"What's the matter, Arthur?" my friend asked.

"I'm fed up," Arthur said. "I have a lot of drips on my hands. They wired the office they weren't having any fun. I am supposed to dance with all the women on our tour. Why don't you dance with one of them?"

"Me?" my friend said in surprise. "I am an Indian."

"What do you mean?" Arthur asked naïvely.

"Ah, you must read the conditions," my friend said mock-heroically.

"What conditions?" he asked.

"Ah!" we said in chorus, but Arthur didn't know what it was all about.

One day the pure-white agency disappeared. It had gone into liquidation. I read about it accidentally in the London *Times*.

"I think this calls for a bottle of wine," I said to myself.

The wine was good. Jesuitengarten 1921. Pure white wine.

The tone of the letters from home was changing. My father still retained faith in the old way of thinking. His faith in the Service and its tradition never shook.

But my mother wrote differently. "I went to see Gandhiji the other day," she said in one of her letters. "Seeing Gandhiji gave one such a peaceful feeling even though one associates him with political unrest and re-

bellion. I told him about you. He asked what you were studying and I told him you were reading law. 'Very useful in India,' he said, and smiled."

I read mother's letter again. She had referred to him for the first time as Gandhiji. Hitherto it was just "Gandhi." The suffix was a term of respect.

At this distance it was not possible to judge the results of all the little changes that had taken place in India or understand the significance of the greater political events which had occurred during my absence from home.

There had been two civil disobedience movements with arrests and imprisonments or, as the latter were termed, "detention during His Majesty's pleasure," which was another phrase for imprisonment without trial.

There were several attempts at conciliation and finally the Round Table Conference at which the representatives of Britain and India sat in the hope of thrashing out their differences. Like all historic moments, all this is now only of academic interest.

Finally, in February, 1938, I left England to return home.

The bleak outlook of Tilbury Docks on a cold February morning receded as my ship sailed. Three friends waved me goodbye. As a parting gift they brought back to me my cigarette case which was nestling in pawn. My wallet was empty except for a three ha'penny stamp.

As I watched the English landscape fade, I felt a little sad at leaving England where I had spent eight of the most impressionable years of my life and where I had enjoyed a freedom of living, of thinking and of feeling, which I was not sure I would be able to retain

in India. Yet in another way I was glad to be returning to India, which I regarded as my eventual home. India reflected my own mood—that of incessant struggle. Struggle had always fascinated me.

The family was at the pier waiting for my ship to dock. Everyone at the docks seemed to know of my arrival for my father had been until a year before collector of customs and by virtue of that office knew a large number of customs men and all that happened in the vicinity of the docks. As I watched the policemen on duty clearing the gangway for him and the officers in uniform saluting him smartly, I realized that in him too was something of the authority of the *raj*.

As we were driving home in the family car, my mother drew my attention to another car which crossed us on the road. From its radiator cap a little flag impertinently fluttered in the wind.

“What is that flag?” I asked her.

“That is our national flag, don’t you know? Green, white and saffron.”

In the car was an Indian wearing a Gandhi cap.

“That is Mr. Kher,” my mother added.

“Who is Mr. Kher?” I asked.

“He is our prime minister, of course.”

The policeman on point duty gave Mr. Kher’s car the right of way. As it passed, the policeman saluted the occupant with the Gandhi cap.

My father observed an embarrassed silence at my mother’s enthusiasm.

Later that day he said, “Let us see how the new experiment in self-government works. For the moment self-government has only come to the provinces. Ultimate power is still in the hands of the British. We must move with circumspection and we must be sure of our-

selves. If a new era comes no one will be more glad than I, but it must come to stay."

So the days in India passed.

My problem was to get my bearings in the India to which I had returned. I had also to decide what I was going to do with myself. My father now wanted me to settle down to a career at the Bar.

One day at dinner I casually mentioned to him that I had got a job.

"What as?" he asked

"As a journalist," I replied.

He smiled. We did not discuss it any more. Days later he said to me, "I see you don't go to the courts these days. Where do you go?"

"To the office."

"What office?" he asked in surprise.

"The *Bombay Chronicle*," I said.

"You don't mean that seriously, do you?"

"Of course."

He was very upset. "But what future can you have?" he asked. "Journalism here is a crusade. You don't want to bear a cross all through your life. Writing won't give you a living wage. At the Bar you would have to wait, but one day it would be worth the waiting."

"There are over five thousand brilliant young men struggling as barristers, solicitors and advocates," I said. "Most of them can barely make a living. Journalism has not yet been tapped."

"What if you fail?"

"There is admittedly a gamble in it, but look at the chances I have." He shrugged his shoulders. He was disappointed in me. "Don't you owe some obligation to us?" he said.

"Even at the risk of being called ungrateful this is

one thing I must decide for myself. Your judgment is tempered by values which are no longer true."

"Nonsense," he replied.

"I find this country changed. I think it will change even more in the next few years. Other things besides the British regime will disappear. A transition of political power from Britain to India will not satisfy us. Today we feel we are with the Congress, with Gandhi, with the men who have fought for political freedom. But when freedom comes, so much else will have to change in India. The forces which are progressive in India today may become ineffective tomorrow. Things will move fast when the opportunities to make changes are in Indian hands. I want to be in journalism because there I will be able to feel the pulse of the country."

My father listened to me, but his face was sad. He had counted so much on me, and I was letting him down.

"You might at least congratulate me on getting a job," I added.

"Yes, of course, I am very pleased," he said half-heartedly. "I wish you every success. I have faith in you and the things you set out to achieve. Perhaps because I have been reared in a tradition of caution and security, I am a little afraid. You have more guts. I admire them. What else can I say?"

So, alone, I took my plunge. Yet in a way I was not alone. Other young men all over India were taking their little destinies in their own hands. It was the result of self-assurance, newly born.

In the first days after my return from England I felt uncomfortable in my new surroundings. I missed the life I knew in London and Paris, the harbors of intellect. Often I would think of the days that had gone

as I sat on our veranda during long evenings which seemed to drag.

My first glimpses of beauty, whether of form or of emotion, were of the West, because it was there I first became aesthetically conscious. I thought fondly of London, for London had exquisite charm whatever may have been its faults. It was difficult to dislike London merely because it was the capital of the empire and the source of all our political troubles. It was difficult not to feel the emotion of the crowds which rose and sang "God Save the King" as in the concluding scene of Noel Coward's "Cavalcade," even though the reasoning mind rebelled against paying homage to the British monarchy which symbolized the British domination over us. There was a graciousness about England to be seen in the way it had given refuge to a number of revolutionaries who had fled from the persecution of their own countries. I can think of at least three, Voltaire, Karl Marx and Lenin, but for whom this world of ours would have been poorer in thought and mind.

There were so many other little things about England which I recalled with fondness. I remembered the colorful pageantry of Britain paying homage to George V as on his jubilee he returned from the Abbey and drove back in state to his palace, and how the crowds cheered when he appeared on the balcony to receive the ovation of his people, which broke out like the sudden crash of an orchestra.

In a softer key was the opening night of the theatres with the familiar Rolls-Royces driving up Shaftesbury Avenue, bringing to life the pages of the *Sketch* and the *Tatler*. I remembered Diana Wynyard leaving the theatre on one of these first nights, reflecting such tranquil beauty as I have seldom seen in a woman. I re-

remembered how beautiful was the park in spring with little green leaves sprouting from the trees like the teething of a child and how the flowers would appear, first the virginal buds, which then opened gently till they bloomed in an orgy of color against the background of green.

There were other moments in other parts of Europe which I recalled. I thought of myself rambling on the Swiss mountains away from the cries of the great cities. I remembered the thrill of the toboggan run with the cold wind beating sharply on my face as we shot down. There was always peace to be found at Christmas with the snow spread over everything like a white carpet. I remembered the little schoolgirls from Lausanne who had come up to the mountains to spend their vacations and how we would sneak a date with one of them on the other side of the mountain. It was innocence in all its beauty.

In the central-heated hotel in which we lived, an odd assortment of people had come together. There would be the baron who had been impoverished of his millions and the little American heiress who was being reorientated in Europe. There was the French industrialist with his wife, showing the usual signs of boredom. In the midst of all these people there were a couple of Indian students like me with our student allowance of £30 and an overdraft which a kindly Oxford bank manager had made possible.

The first girl I kissed on the lips was at Beatenberg, sitting on a luge at midnight on the snow. She was almost seventeen and I was two years older. It was the week between Christmas and the New Year and the moon was shining as only Metro-Goldwyn Mayer could

make it in an expensive Follies scene. She was an English girl with light brown hair and we had exchanged soulful glances in the ballroom of the hotel the night before. As I thought of all those sweet lush moments that were past, I was reminded of the air, "*Dove sono i bei momenti.*"

Where are those beautiful moments?

"Why are you so sad?" my mother asked me one evening.

"I don't know. There is something missing here."

"Are you unhappy?"

"Not exactly."

"What is it?"

"Nothing really."

"Have you left your heart behind?"

I wasn't sure what she meant.

"Who is she?" she asked more pointedly.

"It's not a woman, Mother."

"Then what is it?"

It was difficult to explain to one's mother that as one grew up one looked for something else in life than the curve of a woman's breast, the size of her waist and the shape of her body.

"You've only just come back. Things will adjust themselves," she said, passing final judgment.

My trouble was that although I was born an Indian, because of my long absence from home, mentally I was seeing my country for the first time after I returned from Europe.

There was a time when seeing India implied a visit to those static landmarks of the country which tourists to India look for.

There was the Taj Mahal at Agra, a marble tomb

which an emperor built for the queen he could not forget.

There was the Juma Masjid, the ancient mosque of the Moslems at Delhi, a hallowed sanctuary comparable to a Benedictine monastery.

There was Fatehpur Sikri, now a ruined city, built by Akbar the great Mogul, as a thanks-offering for the birth of a son, Selim, who afterwards became the emperor Jehangir. Midst the ruins there still stand the palaces of his various wives and the chessboard on which Akbar played with human beings as pawns, bishops and knights.

There was the Kutub Minar, a column of victory.

There were the caves of Ajanta, carved two hundred years before Christ in a wooded and rugged ravine, with their classical frescoes.

There was Mohenjo-Daro, an ancient city recently excavated, dating to the pre-Aryan civilization of the third or fourth millennium before Christ.

There were the more ornate and delicate temples of the Hindus like the one in Madura or the Kashi Visvanath at Benares on the banks of the Ganges.

In Bikaner there was a seven-storied tower.

In Mysore, there was the Nandi, a bull carved out of a rock.

There was so much more reminding one of the grandeur, the exquisite sensitiveness, the art and beauty of the civilization of our ancestors.

As I looked further back there were our contacts with the Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Chinese, the Arabs, the Central Asians, and the peoples of the Mediterranean. This was due to the early impact of our civilization on other civilizations. The days when Caesar would go back from his battles to Cleopatra

who was always waiting for him across the Nile were comparatively modern in terms of the civilization of which I speak. There are still signs of that ancient civilization to be found along the banks of the great rivers which flowed from the mountains into the plains of India, reminding one of the various phases of our great history, because India has always retained its identity, its peculiar vigor of thought, its clarity and richness of expression.

These rivers have been the blood streams of our civilization.

There was the Indus from which our country came to be called India and across which came caravans, bringing an odd assortment of people who formed the checkered pattern of the country.

There was the Brahmaputra, living in a fable all its own, cut off from the main currents of our history and sweeping in a gracious flow through mountains, chasms and wooded plains in characteristic Indian fashion.

There was the Jumna, the river of song and dance, with all the folklore of our land woven around it.

There was, of course, the Ganga, which is the holy Ganges. Along it could be traced the main threads of our civilization and in its waters was reflected the mood of our people. The Ganges combined the unassailable dignity of the Himalayas from which it sprang with the religious fervor and faith of the holy city of Benares to which it came.

The story of the Ganges is linked with the rise and fall of empires, with the growth and decay of periods of civilization, with the building and burying of great cities, with fulfilment and frustration. There is no mood of ours which has not been reflected in its waters and there is no aspect of civilization which cannot be found

along its banks. This river holds captive the heart of our country and has drawn towards it whole generations which were born, have lived and died on its banks since the dawn of our history.

But all this belonged to a past which was gone even though the landmarks remain.

It was a friend of my father who first suggested that I should see India in terms of its living landmarks. He was a solicitor by profession, a nationalist by conviction and an Indian Congressman in politics.

I had gone to see him on a Sunday morning in his house on Malabar Hill. Though a lawyer with a rich practice, he showed a marked preference for austerity of living which was reflected in his house and surroundings. Though spotlessly clean, the house was bare except for a few essential articles of furniture. There were no pictures on the walls except one of a Hindu deity over which hung a garland of fresh jasmine flowers. There were no carpets in the living room, no pieces of china or brass, no lamp shades on the electric bulbs which hung naked in the middle of the room.

Bathed and dressed from an early hour of the morning, as was his habit, he was wearing the thin pure-white *khaddar koorta*, a collarless shirt worn untucked. He wore a fine muslin *dhoti*, which Americans called "six yards of cheese cloth." His white Gandhi cap, crisply laundered, lay on a table.

"The landmarks of India are not necessarily political. Some are, of course. You must see Bardoli, the scene of the peasant revolt, not only because of its political implication. Bardoli is a typical Indian village. The village is the unit of Indian life. You must see the masses in action, for society in the future will be regulated by their needs. You must go to the Congress session. It

will be held at Tripuri this year. A broad cross section of India goes to these meetings. See everything in India which brings life to the people. See the great industrial plants. See also the little village crafts, for it is the amalgam of all this that is the India of your generation. Above all be conscious of the struggle of the people to be free, for that is the greatest landmark of our time. That is India today."

I listened to him.

"My hair is white," he said, fingering a lock on his well-shaped head. "It is white because of the things that prey constantly on my mind. There is always that inner fear, unconscious though it be, of leaving unfinished the work we have begun. Often I look at that door and wonder when the police inspector will appear with a warrant in his hand. Not today or tomorrow perhaps, for the Congress is in office today and we are the government, but one never can tell. That fear remains so long as we are unfree."

"Fear of jail?" I asked.

"Not exactly. It's not a physical fear, for physically we have become unafraid. We are used to hardships and privations. It is a mental and emotional fear. The thought of being parted from the things in life to which one is instinctively attached—one's home, one's family, one's own children. It's not so easy to be torn away from one's normal surroundings for long periods at a time, yet it has got to be done. It's part of the price we pay for the freedom to which we aspire."

His eyes fell on his little grandchild who was playing trains on the veranda. He called the child, and put his arms around it. The youngster hugged the old man fondly, then went back to play.

Long after that Sunday morning I felt sad when I

thought of the future. Struggle, incessant struggle, lay ahead, followed by disillusionment and more struggle. It was not only the domination of the British that we would have to fight, but there was also the domination of our own people, of orthodoxy, which suffered from fallowness of thought and unprogressive living. Political freedom would be achieved if the movement could be sustained, but after that there would be the greater struggle to free ourselves from our own limitations, from the smallness of our own minds, from those obsolete customs, prejudices and traditions which had eaten into the minds of many of our people. All these were contrary to the spirit of freedom.

There were other aspects of life around me which were disappointing to watch. My father was not wrong about some of the things he said. Journalism, which I had accepted as my vocation, was something of a crusade. Individual journalists told me that they were underpaid. Wages were low. There were no pensions, no provident funds, no security in the present, much less in the future. An Indian nationalist newspaper was like a third-class waiting room at a railway station into which came not only genuine passengers waiting for the next train but all the vagrants of the town who had no other shelter. Most of the journalists of yesterday were on the streets. Others had died in harness, pushing a heavy pen until the very end of their lives. The large majority of those who slaved for the better part of their lives in the offices of an Indian newspaper did it believing, mistakenly, that they were fulfilling a mission and playing a vital part in the shaping of a nation's destiny. It was an expensive belief.

All this took away much of the joy of being a journalist, especially when one saw poor, fearless, God-fearing

young men trudge miles to get the report of a political meeting or stand for hours waiting for a word from Gandhi or a statement from Jawaharlal Nehru. They would come back a long distance feeling inspired that they had brought back a message to fire the imagination of the country. These were the men who plodded long hours in the dust and heat of Indian cities where the only form of transport they could afford was a tram or a bus.

Yet how they came to journalism and still wanted to come! Young men from the colleges, often unable to write correct English, believed they had a hidden talent for writing which was waiting to be discovered. Journalism for the young Indian had almost the same glamour which Hollywood has for the average American girl. For journalism young men were prepared to make any sacrifice. They were willing to work as unpaid apprentices, putting in long hours, subediting agency messages, rewriting the badly worded sentences, and doing in general the most clerical of jobs, believing that with freedom their turn would also come.

There was often no planning in an Indian newspaper. There were no standing instructions given. Nor was there any standard of values for apportioning space. All news about Gandhi and the Congress was printed. Everything else took second place. Each member of the subeditorial staff dealt with world items as he liked. Till late hours of the night, even almost till dawn proof-readers were to be found working for ten and twelve dollars a month. You could see them straining their eyes to read the shabby handscripts that trickled down to the press at all hours of the night. At the wage they earned they could hardly be educated. If there was a mistake in the original script, however obvious, they

did not dare to change it for they did not feel qualified to correct what was written by the man upstairs. Their eyes tired quickly and often one saw them asleep on the pavements outside the newspaper office because they could not afford to go home at night.

Why did these things happen only in India?

These were the thoughts which crossed my mind as I sat on our veranda. All others would be out at that hour of the evening except Maiji who used to sit on a high chair and look at the horizon of the bay where the sun had set. Those were the last days of her life. When the doctors told her that her right eye should be operated on to save the left, she asked very anxiously whether she would lose it. They told her there was an even chance. Then she turned to my father and said, "Let them operate. With the other eye I shall, with God's grace, see your son return."

She was determined to live till I returned. I remember how as I stepped off the boat and drove to her bedside where she was lying with the bandages still on, she opened her other eye and said to me, "Yes, I can see you. You've grown into a fine man."

She would call me often to her bedside just to see me again and again as if she wanted to capture and retain the little details about me. She did not say anything but when she held my hand she was mumbling something, probably a prayer and a blessing for me. After a while I felt that the struggle to live had ceased in her and she passed the last days of her life waiting for her call.

She seemed to belong to a different world and to speak a different language from that of our generation. She retained to the very end her clear-cut views on what was right and what was wrong. To her came poor

people. They had been coming to her for years and no one of her children or grandchildren knew what she had done for them. It was only at her funeral when men and women, unknown to us of the family, wept bitterly that I understood something of the greatness that lay in silent work.

Hers was a peaceful death. It happened one day in September a week after the Parsi New Year. It was about four in the afternoon. She had been resting. She woke up and told the nurse she wanted to have all her children round her. She complained of being short of breath. She was breathing heavily and her eyes were distant and vague.

We gathered round her bed. The doctors were soon in attendance. They gave her atropine because water had got into the lungs. For a brief moment she seemed to be fully aware of our presence. Her eyes looked round the circle in which we silently stood. Then she closed them and her breathing softened.

One of the doctors caught my father's eye and indicated to him that she was passing away. Father wanted them to try harder to revive her but it was more in keeping with her character that she should be allowed to pass away in the same peaceful and dignified way in which she had always lived. Dignity had marked every phase of her life. Her end was like that too, so dignified. I was conscious that an era to which she belonged was passing away with her.

It was an era in which it was an honor to be presented at a king's court and to bow and courtesy to a royal prince; an era in which we as a nation had been at peace and asleep, unaware of the storm raging in other parts of the world; an era dead to reality yet one of graceful living, of a liberalism of thought, of infinite

charity and kindness, of naïve simplicity, of clean living and thinking. That age was dying even as the great lady who belonged to it.

A gentle sea breeze blew through the window as her life ebbed away.

My mother, who had held Maiji's hand as she was passing away, let her eyelids fall when the end came. My aunts and my father who were her own children were restrainedly moved. The old servants came into her room and wept. The *ayah*, her female Christian attendant, made the sign of the cross.

Near relatives and more intimate friends of the family were immediately informed because according to Parsi custom no one was allowed to touch the body once it was bathed, dressed and laid on a marble slab on the floor.

There she lay all night with a priest uttering quiet prayer. Beside her burned sandalwood and soft-smelling incense. Most of us of the house sat up all night near her as a last homage.

In the morning was the funeral. Many hundreds of people came. There were so many faces I did not recognize. About eight in the morning two priests stood in the doorway, as is the custom, and said the last prayers. As they finished, the men who sat outside in the garden filed past her bier, each pausing beside it a few seconds to pay their respects with hands joined in the Indian fashion.

Maiji's face was then covered and as the cortege left the house, the men followed it on foot to the Tower of Silence.

Our dead are always carried that way, with men in white shouldering the bier, carrying it on foot. We believe in a uniformity in death, so that both 'rich and

poor make their last journey the same way. No color, no trimmings, no trappings are allowed. A clean white sheet is all that is draped over the body.

At the Tower of Silence the men who followed the cortege halted. Maiji's face was uncovered for the last time. Then the pallbearers carried her onward to the Tower itself where no one else was allowed.

All that remained was a memory in our hearts.

5

I turned to work.

My first assignment in journalism was to report on the provinces in which the Congress had come to power, to meet the men and women who were conducting our affairs of state, to get the feel of the country under the first popular ministries.

Starting with my own province, I called on the finance minister in Bombay, the Honorable Mr. Latthe. No one knew very much about him except that he was once a schoolteacher.

I was ushered into his room at the imperial secretariat. It was the first time I laid eyes on this quiet, unassuming little man with snow-white hair. He was leaning back in his chair tugging at a *bidee*, which is a homemade cigarette of dry leaf sold sixty for a dime. Latthe wore *khaddar*, of course. On his table lay a Gandhi cap. As finance minister of the government of Bombay, some \$40,000,000 passed yearly through his hands. It was his job to apportion the expenditures of the province.

Latthe was working at that time on a scheme of rural reconstruction, which he explained to me. The problem arose because almost every cultivator had a rural debt which he had inherited with the land. Because of the exorbitant interest charged by the moneylender, the debt could never be repaid. For years it had sucked his lifeblood. Latthe had, therefore, decided on a drastic line of action and a scaling down of the debt by direct

legislation. "It will be brought down to a limit within the paying capacity of the agriculturist on an installment basis," he said.

The agricultural debt of the province was estimated at \$300,000,000—a tidy sum. It was the debt of the *khedoot*, the tiller of the soil. As India was primarily an agricultural country, the peasant was the backbone of the nation.

For the adjustment of this debt, Latthe proposed the creation of rural boards, formed entirely from among the people of the rural areas. "The people on such boards must be familiar with the problems before them," he said. This debt adjustment board was to judge the debtor's capacity to pay. The debt would be reduced to 80 per cent of his capacity to pay and then divided into installments. If it was still impossible for the farmer to pay the debt, some provision would be made to ensure an easy process of rural-debt insolvency.

There were other forms of aid to be given to the farmer. The government was going to make it possible for co-operative societies to function more actively than before. These societies would market the produce. A thousand centers were to be started to train workers to help the cultivator understand the scheme. In time there would be one such worker in every village. Latthe proposed to give the cultivator credit facilities for the purpose of cultivation.

That was roughly the scheme which a Congress finance minister outlined to me, though in greater detail. As I left him still tugging at his *bidee*, sixty for a dime, I thought of all the Englishmen who had sat in that same chair, smoked Dunhill pipes and offered the peasants of India their heartfelt sympathy.

I next went to Bardoli. Bardoli was once an unknown

village, not far from Surat in the province of Gujarat. Here the experiment of *satyagraha* had been successfully tried. The peasants had revolted against the government and refused to pay the tax. Their lands had been confiscated by the government, but later they were returned without the tax being paid. *Satyagraha* had triumphed.

Bardoli was, therefore, a national landmark. One remembered the struggles of the past, the sacrifices of its people, the victories which followed and their significance.

There were only two houses of any consequence in Bardoli. One was a ginning factory, the out-building of which was my resting place for the night. The other was the *ashram* across the way. It was "the house of rest" in which Gandhi stayed.

These were not houses really. They were little shacks with thin walls and a roof, half brick, half mud and straw. They had crude wooden doors and there were iron bars in the windows. By standards of village-India they were called "houses," for other forms of habitation were just mud huts.

Things moved slowly in this part of the world. Time had little significance for the people. One didn't speak of the hours of the day but of sunrise, morning, midday, afternoon, sunset and then night.

Money had a distorted value. The thirty dollars I had in my pocket made me feel disgustingly rich. In Bardoli the people had celebrated the fixing of a minimum wage at a dime a day, because it only cost four cents a day to live and they had never earned as much as a dime a day before. As I lighted a cigarette from my tin of Craven "A" I knew I was smoking away the equivalent of someone's meal.

The peasants of Bardoli thought of life in a way we cannot understand. Wealth was measured in terms of oxen and harvests. To have a square meal was something to be thankful for. The people had different values in life from us, different concepts of color, sound and beauty.

Life was intensely real. It was simplified and reduced to the most unimaginable basic values. There was neither time nor opportunity nor inclination for the things which they regarded as unreal. Art, music, letters seemed out of place in Bardoli. The land was the one great passion of their lives. It was the land, always the land, which dominated the people's lives.

Evening fell that day at Bardoli. I was standing at the wicket gate of the ginning factory and gazing at the fields which sprawled in an unending barrenness before me. Over the countryside there reigned a perfect stillness, accentuated by the quiet of the evening hour. A stray bullock cart passed along the road taking a peasant and his family home after the day's work. The sun was setting and the sky was a crimson glow. It was a strange mixture of the beautiful and the pathetic.

On this Indian village scene Gandhi arrived. To me in that moment, his appearance was symbolic though he was merely returning from his evening walk, accompanied by some of the inmates of his *ashram*. Two little children walked beside him. The grownups followed behind.

I stood where I was and watched this vision which was almost Christlike to behold. In his hand he was carrying a long bamboo, like a shepherd with a halter leading his sheep.

Turner should have painted that background. El Greco should have painted the man.

I saw Gandhi in his *ashram* the next day, for that was the reason for my coming to Bardoli. It was a little after the midday meal, and with waiting I had become a little impatient. An escort arrived to collect me.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

I said I was, although by now I should have preferred the moment postponed. I had prepared a list of questions to ask Gandhi, but when I finally crossed the threshold of his little house, my mind was almost blank.

He was sitting there on a mattress which was on a low board in order to avoid the dampness of the ground. Two secretaries were working quietly in a corner of the room. A mass of papers surrounded him. Although I had seen the Mahatma on numerous other occasions, this was my first meeting with the man. His presence radiated an unbelievable feeling of peace. The first thing I noticed about him was that his body had a strange pink glow about it, the sort of color one found in a new-born babe.

He was reading a letter when I entered the room. He did not look up until he had finished reading. Then he laid the letter aside, picked up his watch and bade me sit down on the larger mattress on which visitors sat.

"Twenty minutes is all I can give you," he said, holding the watch in his hand.

I didn't know how to begin.

"They have told me something about you," he said, "but I think I know more about your family. Your great-grandfather was among our earliest social workers."

He was referring to Maiji's father.

"They put up a statue to him," he said, "but statues don't mean anything. A statue is of stone, a mere dummy. It was the man who was great."

That day Gandhi told me a lot of things about Maiji's father which I didn't know. He took me into a world about which I knew little. He seemed to want to rid me of the influence of the West and give me a setting, a purpose and a direction in terms of India. Once he smiled when I appeared uncomfortable, squatting on the mattress, because my legs would not fold gracefully.

"I cannot give you a chair," he said. "I haven't got one."

I never asked him all the questions that I had noted down. It was more pleasant to allow him to set the pace of conversation and give me a glimpse of his personality rather than to ask him journalistic questions on a handful of topical subjects.

"What did you ask him?" my editor said to me on my return.

"Nothing," I sheepishly replied.

"Nothing?"

"I am afraid not."

"Never mind," he said with understanding. "It happens like that when you first meet him."

In the months that followed I forgot many of the details of that interview but the vision I had seen in that rich evening glow remained, for it had made me feel at peace with the world.

I attended the Congress session in Tripuri that year.

Tripuri was a tiny little village almost barren and uninhabited, which for the occasion had been converted into Congress town. On the site had been built a town of straw. It had its own post-office, its own bank, innumerable shops and restaurants catering to a variety of tastes, car parks, offices, committee halls, dormitories for the delegates, special huts for the leaders, an office for

the president, a press camp, foodstalls, microphones and a gas plant for lighting.

During the session I spent most hours of the day in Tripuri but went back at night to Jubbulpore, the nearest town, where I slept in the house of a young Indian government official, away from the dust and the noise of the crowd. A car belonging to one of the more obscure Indian princes, who was nothing more than a landholder on a large scale, took me each morning to Congress town and brought me back. The boys at the press camp were amused at the idea that I attended Congress sessions in a prince's car and stayed with a government official. But no one thought it really incongruous. It was quite in keeping with the new spirit of India where the concept of nationhood and the desire for freedom was no longer the prerogative of the haves but had spread to the ruling classes and even the ruling princes. As the Congress more than any other organization echoed this sentiment, it drew to it Indians of every sect and community.

The road from Jubbulpore to Tripuri was narrow and winding. Black, rounded boulders stood along it. On them an enterprising advertiser had chalked in large letters: "Castophene for constipation." Then came the long, flat stretch and in the distance, with a haze of dust hanging over it, appeared Tripuri.

As we came nearer, I could see the crowds in patches—groups of peasants, students, politicians. There were all manner of people, full of excitement, waiting for the session to begin. They came every day in cars, horse-drawn carriages, bullock carts and on foot to get a glimpse of Congress town and to pay homage to the men who were directing the struggle for freedom.

I came to Tripuri soon after breakfast each morning.

I had to do a round of interviews and be briefed on matters which would be discussed at the session that day. I would pay a daily courtesy call on Mrs. Sarojini Naidu for whom, in return for being briefed, I did little errands in Jubbulpore. I would be seen walking through Congresstown laden with fresh fruit and cans of tomato soup which I had bought for her. The boys at the press camp called me Sarojini's pageboy.

Sarojini Naidu was more than a woman. She was an institution. She liked to believe she was growing into an old lady, but except for her years, there was very little about her which was not young. For many young men and women she was a sort of legend; the older generation regarded her as somewhat of a rebel.

As a person, she was simple and intensely human. She provided the relief to the melodrama of high politics. Her distinctive habits were her strong nasal sniff and perpetual clearing of her throat. She was a public speaker of no mean ability. Her manner of speech was a mixture of the high church and the high theatre. She was also a poet. Because of her occasional verse, she was known as "The Nightingale." Her poetry was ornate in style, typically oriental, interspersed with a dash of incense, a smell of *mogra* flowers, minarets and jingle-bells. It is difficult to reproduce its tone and texture. It reminded me of a Moslem dressed up for the Id festival or the window display of a Broadway tie shop in summer.

Mrs. Naidu had strong likes and dislikes and voiced her opinions, without fear or favor, of the men within the Congress and its High Command, regarding it a woman's privilege to be outspoken in an assembly which was predominantly male. She was a former president of the Congress. Now she was more of a mother to

its leaders. While the Congress had its groups, divisions and camps, Sarojini Naidu was acceptable to all. No one seemed to mind her feminine intrusion or the way she dismissed, with a remark, the various political leaders, including Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

"That little monkey has been at it again," she said to me one morning.

"Monkey?" I said in astonishment.

Later I discovered she was referring to Gandhi. It was meant to be a term of endearment.

"Jawaharlal is only a *buccha*," she said.

Buccha meant a kid, and whether the great Nehru liked it or not it still remained her verdict on him.

In comparison with other Indian women, especially those who dabbled in politics, Mrs. Naidu retained, even at her mature age, an amazing sense of humor. She told many stories at her own expense. At a college in Lahore which she addressed, the president of the college student society had enthusiastically called her India's greatest and most public woman.

Mrs. Naidu's company relieved much of the monotony of those long hours we waited each day before the proceedings began.

Gandhi was not present at that session for, at the time, he was fasting elsewhere on a political issue. But in spirit he was there. There was a grass hut on the edge of a boulder overlooking the Narbada River which was reserved for him. A Congress volunteer kept guard over it and the villagers came to see it as if it were a temple of worship even though there was no idol there.

After an hour at Tripuri I would be covered with dust, which would get into my nose, throat and ears. There were no trees and the sun was scorching hot. The ground was like an arid desert. An odd mixture of

smells came with the wind from the eating houses, the privies and people's bodies. So many of the peasant women who came in herds like cattle had a peculiar smell of their own, a mixture of stale coconut oil, spinach and sweat. Most of them were illiterate. They came to Tripuri because in terms of their humdrum lives it was like going to a fair. When I looked at any of them they turned their faces away. They were shy. Their expression was uniformly bovine.

The men had more character in them and more individuality. They were hardy peasants, the tillers of the soil. Their dark brown bodies, bare up to their girdled loins, were strong and shapely. Although many of them were uneducated in the orthodox sense of the word, they had commanding presences which attracted attention, and if one could get over the minor irritation they caused as when they belched loudly or spat the red juice of betel nut and *pan*, they appeared an attractive lot.

About three in the afternoon the session began. The delegates gathered in the *pandal* which was nothing more than an oversized shack. Everyone sat on straw mattresses spread on the ground. It was the only way the Congress sat. In village-India there were hardly any chairs to be found.

On a raised dais, padded with cushions, sat the president and the members of the working committee which formed the chief executive body. As each Congress leader mounted the rostrum there was cheering varying with the popularity of the individual concerned. The crowds were in good humor and applauded generously.

I remember a pretty scene when Sarojini Naidu embraced in the Indian way of greeting an old Marathi lady on the dais. The crowds broke out into loud ap-

plause and someone shouted, "*Hind Mata ki jai.*" It meant, "Victory to Mother India," but no one was sure how much of that remark was sentiment and how much was caustic. So everyone laughed.

I asked the pressman sitting near to me who this old Marathi lady was.

"She is the Dowager Maharani of N——. She is the mother of the present ruler," he replied.

"What is she doing in the Congress which stands for the abolition of the princely order?"

"She has been a social worker for many years."

I thought it odd at the time that a Dowager Maharani should work for an institution like the Congress; but then, even among the princely order in India great changes had occurred from the days when the princes behaved like despots under the benediction of the British *raj*.

It was at Tripuri that I first saw some of the national figures of our times. The common cause had brought together a strange variety of men who, but for the movement, would never have found each other.

The most impressive of these was Gaffar Khan, the uncrowned king of the frontier, who overshadowed all others. He had the bearing of a great soldier, a typical product of the North. The territory in which he operated lay at the foot of the Khyber Pass. He was a Moslem, of course, and reflected in his manner the dignity and the upright bearing of his tribe. "Tribe" was the right word in his part of the country for, even today, tribal feuds are not unknown and man kills man for the honor of his tribe. It was odd to think that with such a background, he did not try to emulate the Tartar, Genghis Khan, but instead imbibed and infused into the minds of his warring people the nonviolence of

Gandhi. Gaffar Khan was tall and well built. His hair was closely cropped and he wore a short gray beard. Even at his age he was a picture of a man, physically fit and mentally alert. There was a kindly look on his face and though his skin was sunburned, his eyes were soft and gray.

Another Moslem of great dignity was Maulana Azad. *Maulana* meant "a learned man," the Moslem equivalent of the Hindu word *pandit*. His full name was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. During the long war years Azad, at the persuasion of Gandhi, took over for the second time the stewardship of the Congress.

Azad was and looked a scholar. He was the counterpart of Gaffar Khan. If the latter had been the Duke of Wellington, Azad could be likened to the elder Pitt. The Maulana had the gracious manner of the old world. He had a strength of quiet personality and a measure of kingliness about him. He kept a short Poincaré beard and had a thin, twisted Mephisto mustache. He wore the long Moslem coat and a black cap of Persian lamb. In appearance he was like a Moslem nobleman with his courtly manner, his dignity and his poise.

As a Moslem in the Congress he was in an odd position, for everything around him was Hindu. Clarifying this odd position of his, he said in his presidential address to the Congress at Ramgarh, "I am a Moslem and I am proud of that fact. Islam's splendid traditions of thirteen hundred years are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this inheritance. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilization, are my wealth and fortune. It is my duty to protect them. . . . But in addition to these sentiments I have others also, which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon me. The spirit of

Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments. It guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality."

Among others was Jawaharlal Nehru, idol of the younger men. With his well-chiselled features, he looked more like a Greek god than Kashmiri Brahmin.

Jawaharlal was born the son of a rich Allahabad lawyer. He was schooled at Harrow and finished his education at Cambridge. His early contact with the West and its political philosophies left a permanent mark on him and he was more often at home reading large volumes of Sidney and Beatrice Webb than concerned with a spinning wheel or goat's milk. Jawaharlal was not born of the masses. He was well read, cultured and facile, a Fabian at heart, an aristocrat by birth. Circumstances had compelled him to mix with the large crowds of dumb, driven people because the struggle for freedom was mixed up with the masses.

Assumption of mass leadership often made him feel uncomfortable in his surroundings. He was impatient with the mediocrity he found around him. His belief in nonviolence only came to him because of his implicit faith in Gandhi, but by instinct he would have preferred to have picked up a gun to fight his battle for freedom. Often, because of his obedience to Gandhi's wishes, he found himself confused by conflicting loyalties.

Jawahar boasted of no intuition; no inner voice urged him on. Except for occasions when Gandhi influenced him, his conduct was based on logic and his principles on reason. He was a realist, aware of the great changes which were taking place in the outside world and of the importance of thinking in broader terms

than those of Indian nationalism. But first things had to come first and as a result the cause of India took precedence over other causes.

Jawahar had a sense of humor which was quick and subtle. The years of struggle, however, had burned the smile off his face. Jawahar was often sad and serious. He seemed to want to get somewhere in a great hurry, though no one, perhaps not even he, knew where exactly he wanted to go. Freedom was not the limit of his ambitions.

He had spent more time in prison than out of it. His character was moulded within its bleak and solitary walls. He once said his was a family of convictions. With all that, he was a dreamer. He should never have been in the Congress, for its orthodox element cramped his style. But, born an Indian in the hour of his country's greatest struggle, and sensitive to the humiliation of being unfree, there seemed no other role for him.

His mood was reflected in Blake's "Jerusalem," slightly altered.

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
 Bring me my arrows of desire!
 Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
 Bring me my chariot of fire!
 I will not cease from mental fight
 Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
*Till we have lit again the light
 That shone in this benighted land.*

In sharp contrast to Nehru was Rajagopalachari, then prime minister of Madras. Because his name was a jaw-breaking monicker, he was usually referred to by his initials, C. R.

Rajagopalachari was a serious and austere man. His physique accentuated his austerity. He had a large head

and sharp angular features. He was slight of build, very dark in complexion, and wore powerful dark glasses which hid the color of his eyes. He had a peculiar manner of slanting his head when speaking.

C. R. was one of the most astute brains in the Congress. He had a clear mind and uncanny grasp over every problem he tackled. His approach was analytical, systematic and positive. His mind moved from premise to premise. He was always well armed with facts and figures, never badly informed and never vague or hesitant in his arguments.

As a speaker he did not come within the orator class, for there was no flamboyance in his utterances, no purple patches in his perorations. His similes were few but to the point. He was easy to understand, simple to follow. He spoke down to the smallest brain in his audience, so that no one felt left out. He did not pause for effect in the middle of a speech as did Churchill and Lloyd George. When he found he had nothing more to say he abruptly sat down. Sometimes he was unbearably prosaic but he never missed making his point once he opened his mouth.

He had a very dry sense of humor. The story is told how in New Delhi he, whose full name was Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, said to Marsland Gander, a British war correspondent, "What funny names you English have!"

Some of the Congress high command did not like him because he picked too many holes in their defective reasoning and pointed out some of their contradictions. He paid the price of being too logical in politics.

More typical of the Congress and its intolerance of any other political institutions was Vallabhbhai Patel, commonly known as the Sardar, which meant "big chief." Patel was the party boss of the Congress. He had

been Gandhi's right-hand man in every civil disobedience movement. He possessed an amazing ability for organization. It was difficult to say what Vallabhbhai Patel stood for, because he seldom struck a positive note. He was at his best delivering a vicious, bitter and abusive attack on the British. He was forceful and succeeded in making a point but not without a certain amount of coarseness.

His presence was not impressive for he had neither the chaste dignity of Azad nor the attractive personality of Nehru. He was a cross between a drill sergeant and a party whip.

Shrewd, quiet in planning, Vallabhbhai Patel worked on the masses with amazing success. He could quicken the pulse of the nation. He could act as a stimulant to arouse the people from their apathy. He knew where his strength lay and knew also how to manoeuvre a situation to his point of view. The years spent fighting the British had made him bitter. There was no grace left in him, or charity. He was ruthless in his use of the party machine. Outside the party he was not loved so much as he was feared.

That year the president of the Congress was Subhas Bose. Bose was the man who dramatically escaped from India while under police surveillance to go over to the Japanese, with whose help he organized the Indian National Army of Liberation. At Tripuri, Bose was not the figure in Indian politics which he later became. Behind the scenes the orthodox Congress had decided to oust him from the presidency to which he was seeking re-election. They smirked at the little things he did and said, for Bose had a weakness for playing somewhat to the gallery. He arrived at the meeting that first day on a stretcher, with an ice-bag on his head and two females

fanning him through the long proceedings. It is true he was ill and had high fever, but others under similar circumstances would have preferred to stay away rather than to arrive in this manner.

Bose had no ideology. His conception of freedom was romantic. When Jawaharlal Nehru talked of freedom, he had a certain picture of freedom in his mind. To Nehru freedom meant parliamentary democracy at home and international socialism in foreign affairs. Nehru was positive in his anti-fascism. To Gandhi, freedom meant a decent life and a self-sufficient rural economy. The international picture, however, was remote in Gandhi's mind. But to Bose, freedom was just freedom from the British. There was no ideology about his conception of freedom. He only wanted to oust the British from India and was willing to take any help he could find to achieve his object. Hitler and Tojo he used, but he would have used the Devil himself.

What Bose lacked in ideology he made up by organizational capacity, which equalled that of the Sardar. He could be just as ruthless. This talent of his he revealed for the first time in his organization of the Indian National Army, more familiarly known as the INA. Here were many thousands of Indians who found themselves in foreign lands surrounded by a hostile people whom the Japanese had overrun. The British had withdrawn under Japanese pressure and the Indians were left behind. In such a situation any people would normally have become demoralized. They might have disintegrated and been eliminated. From this hopeless situation, Bose built up in Burma and Malaya an organization in which 60,000 men, manned, trained and commanded by Indian officers, were put into the field in the short space of two years.

Indirectly Bose had solved several other problems of India. While much had been said in India about the need for a common language, Bose's government, *Azad Hind*, adopted a common language for the first time. Every transaction of the government was carried out in Hindustani. Likewise, conservatism and the caste machine were broken down in the common *Azad Hind* messes where everyone ate together—unlike the army which the British controlled, where communal eating was discouraged and caste was preserved. Bose also managed for the first time to put into the field a fighting regiment of Indian women. It was known as the Rani of Jhansi Regiment.

All this had significance for India, even though it was debatable whether a soldier who had once enlisted for a cause should go over to the enemy and fight against those for whom he had enlisted. Indians felt that given opportunities and freedom they could do on a much larger scale what was done in the INA.

All these developments were not discernible at Tripuri. The only important fact which stood out from this conglomeration of men, ideals and politics was that chalk and cheese had come together under the common flag which stood for Indian independence.

The climax of Tripuri was the open session. Here, those resolutions which had been passed by the subjects committee were presented to the Congress as a whole. It was nothing more than a formality.

For this open session, 200,000 men *khaddar*-clad and Gandhi-capped, and women in white cotton saris, gathered under the canopy of the heavens. Out of boulders was carved the dais on which the committee sat. The tricolor of the Congress fluttered in the evening breeze. It was a short session beginning at twilight, with the

evening gray gradually spreading over the countryside. The setting sun tinged the sky with red and gold before darkness fell.

As the breeze came over the heads of the squatting crowds towards me, it brought with it the smell of India also: coconut oil, spinach and stale sweat. All this became nauseating at times. In between the speeches I had strong urges to quit and run to my bottle of Molyneux Cinq. I never could get very enthusiastic over the perspiring crowds, for by instinct I suppose I was a snob. I had been brought up and encouraged to distinguish between the various brands of perfume which stood in a row on my mother's dressing table, ever since I could remember—Guerlain, Chanel, Patou, Caron and the others, after which I found it difficult to appreciate the strong smells of the East, of onion and garlic, of coconut oil and spinach sweat, of the jasmine and the *mogra* flower, of attar and other strong-smelling incense.

Night fell and as the first star appeared in the sky, the session came to an end. The crowd got up to sing the national song, *Bande Mataram*, "Long Live the Motherland." It was a slow and long-drawn-out Hindu song, lacking the fire essential to a national anthem and, as sung by the chorus of young Hindu girls, it was agonizing to hear. Some day we would have to change this tune and adopt Iqbal's more rousing song, *Hindustan Hamara*, which meant "India Is Ours." All that can be done when freedom comes.

As I looked behind me there were many hundreds of rows of people squatted on the ground. They were the masses. Whatever their smell, they were part of the pattern of my country and but for their awakening, we would still have been a nation of flunkies and door-

men, still bowing to the British and still guarding, like stooges, the symbols of the *raj*.

The session was over. The crowds broke up quietly, for they were deeply moved by all they had seen and heard, even though much of what had happened they did not understand. I sat where I was and composed a few lines to round off my dispatch for the day. Then I hurried to the telegraph office to send it to my paper. The crowds were still thick at the exits, but the peasants made way for me. I could hear them discussing the meeting. Most of them had never seen such a crowd before. Even at the village fair, people had not been seen in such great numbers. Then a peasant said to another, "*Bahut lok—bahut lok—ek hazar admi hoiga.*"—"What a lot of people! What a lot of people! There must have been a thousand people today." The peasant could count only that far. He had never had a chance to count beyond. Either in rupees or bales or whatever he was accustomed to count, a thousand was almost the limit of his conception. Beyond that, whether it was two or twenty thousand, to the peasant of India it was still only a thousand.

When I filed my message it was dark. The gas lamps that dotted Congresstown barely lit the place. I could hardly see the faces of the people on the road. I stood under the light waiting for my prince's car. It was our usual meeting place.

The crowds were gone but there were still many people loitering about. The air was filled with the chatter of young men and women excitedly talking over the proceedings of the day. The enthusiasm of youth was a little tiresome at that late hour of the night.

As I waited I heard someone shout my name. At first I did not recognize him in the dark. "Of all the people

in the world!" he said coming across the open ground.

I recognized him then. It was in Paris we had last met. In the years that had passed we had lost touch with each other and it seemed odd that in the midst of the grim reality of Tripuri, he should bring back memories of a world left so far behind. We talked of Paris in those days of tinselled living, of frogs' legs at Fouquet's, of patent leather shoes pattering down the wet boulevards, of mannequins in the modiste shops of the rue Royale who smelled different from the women in the Congress *pandal*. The contrast between those student days and Tripuri could not have been more sharply drawn.

"You don't quite fit into this Indian picture, do you?" he said.

I did not answer him because I was not quite sure at the time how I stood. While I hankered for so much which was not to be found in Tripuri, I was conscious of the fascination of seeing my people reborn. The frogs' legs at Fouquet's were delightful to eat, but here at Tripuri the thrill was different. It was the thrill of a man finding his soul and a nation regaining its self-respect.

These were the thoughts which crossed my mind, and my friend was aware of them.

"Do you know I am married?" he said.

"No," I said in surprise. "When did you marry?"

"A year ago. I've settled down. We are going to have a baby soon."

"Whom did you marry?"

"A girl from Allahabad. She came from a poor family. My father was against the marriage. He wanted a girl with a dowry. He threatened to disinherit me. But I married her."

"Is she pretty?"

"I think so. But she has something more. She has character."

"Is your father reconciled?"

"In a grunting half-hearted sort of way. I think he likes her, but he'd rather die than admit it. He still begins his sentences with 'Yes, but.' One can never argue with him. But it doesn't worry me any more. I made my choice between his money and my life. I couldn't live life his way."

"What about the ancestral wealth?"

"That money is dead. What fun did he get out of it? If he leaves it to me I'll spend it on her. I want her to see the world, for I find she is able to absorb everything without changing herself. She has more character than I have, though I was born rich. Her people are orthodox but they have a sense of decency my own father hasn't. They are not educated in the strict sense of the word, but you can reason with them. Two years ago, her mother used to have a bath each time she touched someone below her caste. She realized one day she was getting worn out having baths. Today there are two *harijans* working in their house and she doesn't think of them as untouchables."

"Your influence?"

"No, my wife's."

The car arrived and I had to go away.

6

Though the Congress session was over I stayed on for a few days in Jubbulpore to look round this typical cantonment town, to rest after slogging for days on the press bench, to eat *pillau* which my host provided and generally to amuse myself.

There was nothing beautiful about Jubbulpore. It housed a training camp for the Indian army and was an important railway junction. Jubbulpore was amusing because it was one of the places in India where Blimps could still be found indulging in their little fads, unconcerned with other forms of human society which lived around. Occasionally from their squat bungalows they would step out, wearing khaki shorts during the day and tuxedos at night, even though there was nowhere special to go.

Jubbulpore was the logical sequel to *Bengal Lancer* and *Clive of India* with Indians shuffling around and constantly bowing to their rulers as in the days of old. No one seemed to be aware that only a few miles away another scene had unfolded itself. The British colonels in Jubbulpore had not seen it, nor did they believe it was true. They were content to do their morning's work in their tin-roofed, red-bricked military offices, then drive to the bungalow for lunch after which they would stretch themselves on easy chairs reading detective fiction or resting, waiting for the sun to go down. The green blinds would be drawn to keep off the glare and round the bungalows creepers would be allowed

to grow to keep the houses cool. Working in the peacetime army of India the British colonels of Jubbulpore had no great problems. Nothing disturbed the even tenor of their uneventful lives except when the water taps went out of order or when the cook put too much spice in the Sunday curry. Then maybe they would curse or swear, but all this wrath got washed down by evening with the first glass of Scotch.

So life went on.

From Jubbulpore I moved east into the province of Bengal to revisit Calcutta, which I had known as a boy. Very little had changed in this second largest city of the empire. The Englishman of Calcutta had the mind of his predecessor in the East India Company, and to him the Bengalis were like men of the forest peering from the thick clusters of over-crowded localities, in which they lived, into the sunny expanses where their "bloody rulers" were basking. There was, therefore, always an atmosphere of permanent tension between the English and the Indians.

There were cosmopolitan clubs. Business and the services necessitated social intercourse between the two communities but these meetings often had an air of artificiality about them. Each was uncertain and suspicious of the other.

I attended the annual social function of the famous Calcutta Club where most of the socialites gathered. It was like a prize day in a small provincial school with candies and ice cream being consumed in gargantuan quantities while a few of the more sophisticated members sipped cocktails in quiet corners. Grown-up members and their guests were to be seen amusing themselves in a treasure hunt and parlor games. The program of the day said, "... 9:30: there will be music

... Please walk about the club and the gardens and meet us and each other. We are wearing rosettes."

Later that evening I found myself entangled in conversation with the wife of one of our many princelings. I had often seen her name in the journals and her picture in the society magazines. She was a leading socialite and was very popular in the province. She did social work, they said.

"Do you like Bombay or Calcutta?" she asked me.

I replied I had no particular preference.

"You don't like Calcutta?" she asked.

"I do."

"And you like Bombay?"

"Yes."

"Which do you like more?"

"Well, I . . ."

"Of course you must like Bombay more."

I nodded.

There was a brief pause after which she shot another question at me. "You haven't got any parents, have you?"

"Why, yes. I have."

"No brothers?"

"Yes, I have one."

"Then you have no sisters?"

"Yes, I also have a sister."

"They are not married, of course?"

"No."

"Then you are also not married?"

"No."

"Then why do you like Bombay more?"

It could have gone on like this for months if I had not had sufficient presence of mind to get up, make my excuses and tell her I had to see a man about a dog.

All these were trivial things and on the broader canvas of Indian social life they were unnoticeable. It was, however, not the incident itself which had any particular significance but the circumstances which led to it. Emancipation as it was taking shape was crude and ugly in form, because in many cases the necessary foundation for that emancipation was lacking.

Calcutta, unlike Bombay, had its vast straggling suburbs. The way to Ballygunge, the smart residential quarter, ran through a picturesque avenue. Lined with sal trees, it resembled the outskirts of Paris, for dotted along the road were houses with long drives and impressive iron gates.

Sometimes I would drive through the crowded city. In the back lanes were the Indian sweetmeat shops which never seemed to close. Through these crowded localities, the tram cars squeezed, crawled and clanged incessantly. It was the India of a thousand smells.

But Chowringhee, the Broadway of Calcutta, presented a different appearance, the air-conditioned Metro Cinema, with its soda fountain and its modern Indian murals, was a strange and pleasant blending of the East and the West. It was built by Metro-Goldwyn Mayer to exhibit their pictures. Ben Cohen ran the place. He was "an American," they told me, a crooner of some distinction when Bing Crosby was not even known. Out in India Ben Cohen was not subjected to the discrimination from which his people often suffer in America.

There was also the fashionable Three Hundred Club. One ate well at the Three Hundred and one also danced. Its atmosphere was friendly. In a side room which was the long bar, you heard the clang of fruitmachines and sometimes the crash of a jack pot. In the corners of the room, under the shaded lights, one heard the slow

whisper of sweet discourse—the small talk of the diners and dancers—till the early hours when the last couple left.

In New Market one could buy almost anything for the house, from a loaf of bread to a Persian carpet. Prices varied according to the look on one's face and no two people ever paid the same unless they were twins.

There were a lot of things about Calcutta which one didn't find in most Indian cities. It had a Chinatown of its own. As late as 1921 this district, north of the town, was quite a danger spot for the sort of thing one reads about in tough gangster books, and the police could do very little to stop an occasional stabbing. But now the thrill had gone, and even the Chinese who still lived in the place had changed their ways. There still remained the dirt and squalor of the narrow streets and the cheap eating houses. The stink of hides from nearby godowns filled the air. There were innumerable Chinese clubs and teashops where mahjong was played and knives were drawn. When the players tired of the game they would step into the anteroom and refresh themselves with a few puffs of opium. Opium-smoking was fascinating to watch. It was not the smoking which was attractive so much as the intensive preparation which preceded the smoke.

My escort to Chinatown was the leading Chinese of Calcutta. He ran the Nanking restaurant. He showed me an opium den where the smokers lulled themselves to gentle sleep. First, out of liquid opium a pill was made and the pipebowl was filled. The smoker then leaned his head on the porcelain headrest, adjusted himself comfortably on it and started to puff at his pipe. Not long afterwards he was in a dreamland of his

own from which, when the effects of the opium wore off, he would awaken to reality again.

It was, however, not by its Three Hundred Club, its New Market, its Metro Cinema, or its one-time opium dens, that Calcutta or the province of Bengal would be remembered. Out of Bengal in the recent years has come one of the strongest movements for the revival of Indian art and culture. To Calcutta belongs the poet, Rabindranath Tagore.

I remember the first time I saw him. I was with my grandfather one evening in our old Sunbeam car. It was parked along the water front and Tagore had come to speak to my grandfather. A quarter of a century has passed since then but I can still remember the poet with his flowing beard, his cultured voice, his long white hair, his deep-set eyes and his white robes. He looked just like one of the Apostles.

Tagore moved as if each movement of his were a line of poetry. His manner had the cadence of his prose. He walked with his head held high, believing in the future of his people, believing in their struggle for freedom, believing also in the righteousness of the national cause. He stood high above and apart from other men in intellect and in spirit. He was once knighted by the British but, after the massacre at Amritsar, he returned his knighthood.

All through his life he never lost sight of the heritage of his people. For his country he won international fame when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Tagore wrote both prose and poetry. His plays like those of Chekhov, the Russian, were marked by a native simplicity. He appealed to the Indian mind because his writing was simple and unsophisticated and because his thoughts were fine and pure.

While the winning of the Nobel Prize is no small achievement, he really did more than that for his people. He helped India to refind herself and, to resurrect from the past the glory that once was hers. He founded Shantiniketan, a university devoted to the revival of Indian art and culture.

Hitherto art in India was spasmodic and diffused. The individual struggled to express himself. He had no teachers to help him, no source on which he could draw. It was Tagore's idea that at Shantiniketan would gather some of the best talent which was to be found in the country, and in its picturesque setting the young artist could express the freedom of the spirit. So Shantiniketan was founded. At first, as was natural, it showed signs of a strong Bengali influence over it, but soon there came to it men and women from all parts of the country, and Shantiniketan began to reflect not merely the mood of a province but that of a whole country.

Tagore was an artist with an eye for exquisite beauty and a poet not of one but of all ages. But in the India of his time even art and literature could not exist apart from the political upheaval which was surging through the minds of men, nor could they be oblivious to the struggle of the people to free themselves. It was, therefore, natural that in Tagore, whose eyes reflected the story of his suffering people, one found a patriot who burned with a flaming passion for his country's freedom.

Aware that he was soon going to die, he made a speech on the anniversary of his eightieth birthday—April 14th, 1941. He spoke on the crisis in civilization. He began by narrating how at one time he had an abundant faith in Britain and how he had read the speeches of John Bright and through them became aware of the largeness of heart of the British people.

But that faith was gone. He had come to realize how the British had tried to divide his countrymen, how they had reduced his people to penury and how, in the name of law and order, they had established in his country a policeman's rule.

Then he said:

I had at one time believed that the springs of civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. Today when I am about to quit the world that stubborn faith has gone bankrupt altogether. Today my one last hope is that the deliverer will be born in this poverty-stricken country, and from the East, his divine message will go forth to the world at large and fill the heart of man with boundless hope. As I proceed onward, I look behind to see the crumbling ruins of civilization strewn like a vast dunghheap of futility. But I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Perhaps that dawn will come from this horizon, from the East, where the sun rises. And another day will come when the unvanquished man will retrace his path of glory, despite all barriers, to win back his lost human heritage.

Tagore died in August, 1941, but for many young Indians he had only just begun to live, for his was the spirit of our India.

I did not tarry long in the second city of the empire. Soon I was on my way to the adjoining province of Bihar to see the town of steel, Jamshedpur.

Jamshedpur was named after its founder, Jamsetji Tata. It housed the steel works of the Tata Iron and Steel Company, the largest integrated unit of its kind in the British Empire. Before the war it gave employment directly to 50,000 people and indirectly to 100,000.

It could produce a million tons of steel a year. Its gross earnings were more than the revenue of most of the provinces of India.

The story of this company is more striking when one bears in mind the background against which it is written. Its rise and growth have their origin in small beginnings, when as far back as 1887 the genius of the old man Tata first conceived the idea that economic independence was essential to the country's progress.

Beginning as a small trading company with the modest capital of \$7,000, the House of Tata grew to become the \$300,000,000 industrial empire which it is today. Because of what was achieved in industry it became possible for us to claim an equal share in the new order in the world. That a man who lived so far back as the second half of the nineteenth century should have seen this vision and worked for it is a tribute to his deep, intuitive faith in the natural resources of the country and in the energy and persistence of its people. J. N. Tata did not live to see all his great dreams realized, but his idea was the inspiration for those who followed in his footsteps. Like John Brown, his soul kept marching on.

This amazing home of the steel industry was a sort of state all on its own. There was nothing like it anywhere else in India. The general manager of the steel works, whose name, strangely, was Sir Joe Gandhi, was the lord and master of 100,000 people who worked under him. They owed a loyalty to the works around which, in a strange pattern, was woven the main thread of their lives. The people had an inborn loyalty to the works and the story of their lives was like the one Richard Llewellyn told in *How Green Was My Valley*.

It was fascinating to watch the rise of a community

on a barren wasteland, to see how a whole town was planned, how labor on a large scale was controlled, how health schemes were evolved and how, in a forlorn part of the world, a community, almost isolated, could live self-contained. Jamshedpur had its own water, light and electric plants, its own railway which measured more than 150 miles, its own farms, its own life, even its own ideals. It seemed a much happier spot than the industrial towns in the north of England which I had seen. There were no bread lines, no unemployment, no epidemics of death or disease, no frustration of effort, no barriers of caste, creed or religion. Jamshedpur knew little of the struggle of industrial communities in other parts of the world. It was a homogeneous place in which were to be found the pillars of industry, affectionately supported by those who were only the nuts and bolts.

Jamshedpur had its own social life. The parties in private homes were mostly stag and the high-watermark of social life was the poker game each evening.

The women of any consequence in Jamshedpur numbered only three. They were wives of officials in the steel company. The others whom I saw were tall strapping tribeswomen with their white *saris* thrown casually over their naked breasts, wearing their hair in Edwardian style as was the custom of the tribe. The carrying of loads had made these women strong and there was rugged beauty in their dark-brown, well-shaped, half-naked bodies.

When night fell, Jamshedpur was an unforgettable sight. As I stood on a ridge and looked at the rich glow of the steel furnaces against the background of the black night, it was a thrilling sight. The skeleton of the structure produced an image of strength. The smoke

of tapering chimneys, which stood like massive spires pointing heavenwards, the whirling of the machinery striking a rhythm of its own, the piercing shriek of sirens which blew in the middle of the night, the glow of embers which fell like a shower from the heavens, the golden stream of molten metal which was poured in and out of massive cups like the nectar of the gods, the glowing red ingots, the silhouette of black stacks which shot up into the sky, stabbing the thin veil of the night, the syncopation of turning wheels and the beat of primitive rhythm as with a hammer the blades were moulded into shape—all this was Jamshedpur at night. I felt the warmth of blast furnaces on my cheeks. And I also felt the absurdity of having to strike a match to light my cigarette in the midst of all this power, heat and energy. In the dustbin-like cover, they told me, there was enough explosive gas to blow up the whole town.

I left Jamshedpur at night and for many miles after the train had left the station, I was still looking out of the carriage window watching the red glow that filled the sky.

And so I moved again to another town and then another, until I went all over India and in time I saw something of my country and its people.

There was a richness in the land, and yet the men and women on it were poor, underfed and emaciated. The condition of the people was a result of lack of education and a shockingly low standard of living. We had lived too long under an alien rule. Whenever our interests had clashed with the vested interests of our rulers, it was we who had suffered. Our national growth had been stunted and it was a sad comment on our

rulers that in over a century and a half, the literacy of our people had not been allowed to rise above twelve per cent.

Often on those long journeys in India, I looked out of the window of my railway carriage at the landscape as it passed by. There were miles and miles of lowland, sometimes mountains, sometimes fields with crops, sometimes barren parched areas burned out for want of rain. The only signs of human life to be seen from the railway carriage were a few men working on the fields and naked children with protruding abdomens. In our mad rush from one westernized city to another, most of us hardly had time to look at these people. Nobody ever heard them speak. They just lived their allotted span of years and then they died. They wanted nothing because they did not know what there was to want. Many had never seen the lights of the great cities or ventured farther than their plot of ground. They were aware only of the life around them with its barefooted men and women and dark-brown Indian children, always with their abdomens protruding, running about as if the world belonged to them, unashamed of their nakedness and unconscious of their sex.

I wondered whether these people ever imagined that elsewhere in the world there were clean broad avenues, houses built differently from their cow-dung huts, skyscrapers whose spires could be reached by means of an elevator.

Did they realize that somewhere men could wash in warm water that flowed from bright shining taps into enamel bathtubs and that one could wipe one's body with a turkish towel instead of waiting until it dried in the open air under the sun?

Did they know that there was music in the world

different from the singing of the birds and the strange noises which came from little bamboo sticks with holes pierced in them?

Did they ever smell anything except the odor of their own bodies and did they have any conception of living other than that when the sun shone it was time for work and that when night approached one rested one's tired limbs on the ground until the next morning?

It was an Englishman, Verrier Elwin, who first made me realize the meaning of poverty in India.

Elwin was speaking at the Rotary Club of Bombay about his work among the aboriginal tribes of India, in the midst of whom he lived. His background was that of a classical Oxford scholar. Brilliant in conversation, cultured and polished in speech, a man of letters whose prose was of the best of our generation, Elwin's work in anthropology ranks among the great modern contributions on the subject of Man.

Elwin said:

We are so used to poverty in India that we often forget what it is. I remember one day a family coming to us in tears, for their hut and all they possessed had been destroyed by fire. When I asked how much they wanted to put them on their feet again they said, "Four rupees"—the price of a single copy of *Brave New World*.

That is poverty.

In Bastar State once, a *Maria* [an aboriginal type] was condemned to death and on the eve of execution they asked him if there was any luxury he would like. He asked for some *chapatti* [wheaten bread] and fish curry, made after the city style. They gave it to him and he ate half of it with great enjoyment, then wrapped the remainder up in the leafplate and gave it to the jailor, telling him that his little son was waiting outside the prison door. The boy had never tasted such a delicacy. but he should have it now.

That is poverty.

Poverty is to see little children taken from you at the

height of their beauty. It is to see your wife age quickly and your mother's back bend below the load of life. It is to be defenseless against the arrogant official, to stand unarmed before the exploiters and the cheat.

Poverty is to stand for hours before the gate of the court of justice and to be refused admission. It is to find officialdom deaf and the great and wealthy blind.

I have seen children fighting over a scanty meal of roasted rat.

I have seen old women pounding wearily at the pith of the sago palm to make a kind of flour. I have watched men climb trees to get red ants to serve instead of chillies.

Poverty is hunger, frustration, bereavement, futility. There is nothing beautiful about it.

Sad though it was to see the poverty of India, I was never ashamed of our people for in my country with its background of ancient culture and its roots in pre-Christian philosophy, material wealth was not the only criterion of richness. There was character in our people and they made up for many of their deficiencies by a native wisdom. A certain nucleus of common knowledge had been handed down from generation to generation.

Of course, there was superstition and prejudice. Superstition had played a great part in the people's lives. It was responsible for the presence of obsolete ideas and customs which affected the welfare of many millions.

More than the British it was orthodoxy, prompted by superstition, which stood in the way of the country's advancement. It blocked the progress of science and the adoption of knowledge which belonged to the contemporary world. It was difficult, for instance, to preach birth control and thereby to stop this wanton wastage of human energy and human life because, as in the Catholic tradition, the practice of birth control was considered immoral in many an Indian home. Paul

Thomas, an Indian Christian, wrote in *Women and Marriage in India*: "Sex itself was bad enough and they [orthodox people] could not imagine people complicating it with pessaries, sheaths and other appliances." The result was the abnormally high birth rate of India and its correspondingly high infant mortality due to a lack of care and attention required for rearing a child.

All this was disheartening.

There were moments when one felt hopelessly frustrated by the things that happened and kept happening around us.

There was the horrible godhead of caste, a legacy from the past.

While in the village the Hindus and the Moslems lived peacefully together, there were sharp clashes between them in the large cities which could be traced to the preachings of the lesser *pandits* among the Hindus and the *maulanas* among the Moslems. No one could do anything to bridge this widening gulf for, due to illiteracy, the gospel of living and thinking as separate religious communities had been successfully preached in the cities of India.

There were, moreover, the sixty or seventy million human beings who were regarded as untouchable.

The dice appeared to be loaded against those of us who had dreams of the future. But for our fortitude, we would have given up the struggle long ago because of the odds against us.

But that was not, however, the correct way to look upon India nor was it the way to face our colossal problems. I soon realized that to understand my country I had to look upon it not in detail but in terms of the direction in which it was moving. Caste then became

unimportant even though the institution of caste had remained, typical of the backwardness of the people and of the limitations of the country.

It was no use pretending that caste did not exist nor was there any point in finding excuses for it.

As late as 1943 an incident occurred in an enlightened city like Bombay which left a horrible taste in our mouths. A Hindu advocate of the Bombay High Court wrote to me requesting that I give it publicity in my daily column.

The story was of an untouchable named Pochanna Karila, permission for the cremation of whose dead body in the Hindu crematorium had been refused. The municipal commissioner who was informed of the incident regretted he could do little in the matter for it was beyond his power to compel a crematorium to be used for the dead bodies of untouchables. Caste in India had differentiated not only among the living but also among the dead.

One day, more recently, I asked an orthodox Hindu about caste.

"It is very important," he said. "I have made a special study of caste for several years. Most fascinating study and, I should say, most essential to the study of the Indian question. The best account I find is given in a new book I have read. It is written by one American author."

Mr. Apte, who was a Brahmin, spoke his own brand of English.

"Is there no Indian authority on the subject?" I asked.

"There is, but this American gives more than even I knew before."

"Who is this American?"

"I never heard of him up till now but he is undoubtedly a very deep scholar. His name is something like ice. If you will please to wait a minute, I will find the book which I have recently purchased."

He looked among his books.

"I mean snow, not ice," he corrected himself. "Edgar Snow. Have you heard of him?"

"Yes," I replied. I didn't tell him Ed had written the introduction to my *Chungking Diary*, for that would have taken away much of Ed's glamour for Mr. Apte.

He continued, "Mr. Edgar Snow says that there are about two thousand subcastes in the Hindu community. There are, of course, four main castes—Brahmins, like myself, which is the best caste. Then come the Kshatriyas who are the warrior class, then the Vaishyas who are merchants, and then the Sudras who are menials. This is very important to the understanding of Hinduism."

"How is it important to the problem of India?"

"Because there are two hundred and sixty million Hindus in India, according to Mr. Edgar Snow."

"Let's leave Mr. Snow alone for a while," I said. "Just tell me how the division of Hinduism into two thousand subcastes is important to the Indian problem."

"Well, you see it is like this. The Brahmin, that is the highest and most respected caste, will not marry a lower caste person, nor should he, strictly speaking, dine with or even touch one from a lower caste and so on, till you come to the untouchables whom no one must touch."

"But how does it affect the country and our problem as a people?"

"Well, it is difficult to explain but the whole idea

of caste is that everyone is different. And that is how it has always been, so how can we change it now?"

"What do you mean by 'different'? You mean they are not born equal."

"Well," he said hesitantly, "that is so. For instance you cannot perform a religious ceremony unless you are of Brahmin caste."

"Can't other Hindus pray?"

"They can pray, but they say a Brahmin's prayer is certain to be heard by God."

"You say 'they say,' who is 'they'?"

"That is Hinduism. You must either believe in it or not."

"How would you suggest the caste problem be solved?"

"I say we can try to be tolerant and understanding. But caste will exist. If everyone thought he belonged to one caste, there would be no caste system. Then what would become of the Brahmins?"

"That is true. God might not then know which prayers He should hear and which He shouldn't."

"Now, Mr. Snow says. . . ."

"But why do you always bring in Mr. Snow?"

"I find Americans understand our caste system better than we ourselves do."

One day I bought Snow's book. It contained a mass of information concerning things we had never bothered about. Snow was encyclopedic about caste. In his best *Saturday Evening Post* style he said, "About thirty per cent of Hindus belong to the Arayasamajists, who believe in one God. It is the Sanathanists, who are polytheists and cow-worshippers, with whom Moham-medanism disagrees most sharply."

Mr. Snow's book had a very large sale in the United

States. I know that Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin all read it, the latter by means of a special translation. Edgar Snow on caste in India made impressive reading for Americans, but the poor Indian who met one of Snow's numerous readers was always being asked how caste was getting on in India. To us it sounded like a kind inquiry about an ailing aunt.

We are, however, not the only people in the world with a caste system.

Caste existed in Britain in a virulent form before World War II. Hitler bombed some of it out. Englishmen with Old School ties went underground with those who wore no ties at all. They shared the same air-raid shelters. The façades of Park Lane were blown away with the same bombs that fell on workmen's houses. Rationing of food, fuel, and clothing saw peers of the realm take their turn in queues behind the housewives of working-class Britain. An equality of sacrifice was thrust upon the people. The saga of the war testified that those who came from mill, farm or factory made just as great sons of Britain in its hour of need as those who came from the playing fields of Eton and Harrow.

In America caste has remained strong. It has persisted in spite of the lessons of history and the loss of 300,000 of its sons in World War II. The reason is that while America went to war, the war never came to America; Park Avenue was never hit; the Gentile never had to go into a shelter with the Negro and the Jew; rationing of food was often nothing more than a curtailment of vulgarity.

Caste in America was, therefore, still to be found in the so-called "restricted" apartment houses and the "restricted" clubs, hotels and societies which dotted the

land. From them some poor guy was always being excluded. The Daughters of the American Revolution denied to Hazel Scott, a top-ranking artist, the use of a concert hall for no other reason than that she was a Negro.

There was something horribly similar between the Brahmin's attitude to the untouchable and that of the American white to the Negro and the Jew.

In India the Brahmin wore his caste marks on his forehead because it was the only way he could assert his superiority. While he had once been responsible for preserving the ancient culture of the land, today in a casteless society he was afraid of being swept away. In a race for the survival of the fittest he would not survive.

"The Brahmins" of America tried to assert their superiority by putting their names into a book called the Social Register, because, in spite of the superiority they alleged, they feared the encroachment of the Negro and the Jew.

But how long could caste, whether tattooed on the forehead or registered in a book, maintain itself? How long would it be possible for the Brahmins of India to bathe each time they touched a man from a lower caste and how long would an effete class in America continue to segregate itself in the face of the rise of the common man all over the world and the gradual breaking down of the tottering fortresses of caste in this war?

The history of the world proves that birth without backbone does not long survive. Within a quarter of a century the counts and barons of St. Petersburg who formed the ancient nobility of Czarist Russia were seen driving taxis in the streets of New York and Paris. Their women who once spent their days pouring tea out of

crested samovars are today serving in hatshops frequently Jewish-owned. Some White Russians have opened night clubs and others have waited on humbler folk with a serviette over their arm. The crests of the nobility have tarnished from poverty and even the *Almanach de Gotha* has ended its days.

In Russia today the fittest have survived. Stalingrad was the epic of the common man. It was the common man of Soviet Russia who stemmed the Nazi onslaught on his native land and guarded the fields which had been tilled by his fathers. It was he who broke what Churchill called "the Nazi war machine with its clanking, heel-clicking, dandified Prussian officers," symbols of Nazi caste, and who smashed the dream of world domination of that small group of blond Aryans "who planned, organized and launched this cataract of horrors upon mankind."

In twelve years after the arrival of Hitler on the German scene, this superrace of blond Aryans who felt superior to Jews, Negroes, and all others who happened to be unlike them, was beaten on every battlefield of Europe. "The dull, drilled, docile, prudish masses of Hun soldiery who once plodded on like a swarm of crawling locusts," to borrow again the language of Winston Churchill, smarted from many an Allied whipping till at a small red brick school of technology at Rheims, they surrendered and pleaded for mercy.

When the war was over, the Nazis, who believed in race superiority, were tried and shot for the inhumanities they had perpetrated on the Jews in the horror camps of Belsen, Buchenwald, Oswiecim, Maidenek and Dachau. Americans sat in judgment over them at Nuremberg and other places but on their own side of

the Atlantic, head waiters in the smart restaurants usually managed to usher their Jewish patrons to inconspicuous corners.

Elsewhere, in the Pacific, the war lords of Japan were humbled. The emperor with divine powers and a pure white steed, the symbol of caste in Japan, was likewise humbled by G.I. Joe who was probably the son of a Milwaukee butcher. Purple Hearts and Congressional Medals were pinned on many an American whose name could not be found in any Social Register. Nearly 300,000 Americans laid down their lives for the freedom and equality of others, but caste remained untouched in their own country.

In India, with twelve per cent of its people barely literate, living for 150 years under a form of government which was neither popular nor democratic, social reform had been given very little chance to fulfil itself. In fact, it has been the declared policy of the British government since the days of Queen Victoria not to interfere in any religious or social practice, however evil or pernicious it may be. Under the plea of defending religious rights, the British resisted every movement of reform. Those who were fighting the British for the freedom of the country were, however, not unaware of the need for breaking the caste Hindu machine which had dubbed some sixty or seventy million of our fellow countrymen as untouchable.

It was Gandhi who struck the first blow at Hindu orthodoxy in his presidential speech to the Congress in the year 1925.

He was then at the height of his power and popularity. His countrymen worshipped the very ground over which he walked. Like a storm he had swept unchecked over the minds and hearts of men. He was the

champion of Indian liberty. He was the first soldier in our war of liberation.

In his speech, Gandhi shook the caste machine to its foundations. Untouchability, he said, was another hindrance to the attainment of freedom. It was essentially a Hindu question and Hindus could not claim or take freedom till they had restored the liberty of the suppressed classes.

"Our helotry," he said, "is a just retribution for our having erected an untouchable class."

Hitherto, religion was never dragged into the political arena. Priests had enjoyed an immunity from criticism, comment and attack. But Gandhi did not spare the Brahmin priests.

He said, "The priests tell us that untouchability is a divine appointment. I am certain the priests are wrong. It is blasphemy to say that God set apart any portion of humanity as untouchable."

Untouchability arose in India because of the work done by these people, once as individuals and later as a class. These were the people who cleaned the privies in the days when sanitation was still in its most primitive stage. Society regarded these men as unclean and contact with them as polluting. The caste Hindu who bathed after contact with the untouchable believed he was purifying himself and cleansing his polluted self.

Gandhi said, however, that the purification required was not of the untouchable but of the so-called superior castes. "There is no vice that is special to the untouchables, not even dirt and insanitation. It is our arrogance which blinds us 'superior' Hindus to our own blemishes and which magnifies those of our own down-trodden brethren whom we have suppressed and whom we keep under suppression.

“Religions, like nations,” he went on, “are being weighed in the balance. God’s grace and revelation are the monopoly of no race or nation. They descend equally upon all who wait upon God. . . . God is light, not darkness. God is love, not hate. God is truth, not untruth. God alone is great. We, his creatures, are but dust. Let us be humble and recognize the place of the lowliest of His creatures.”

There were two Indias which heard these words. One India needed to be told only once that untouchability was a sore in society and a hindrance to the attainment of independence. With the awareness of being a nation desirous of freedom, there had come a sense of decency towards one’s fellow men which was instinctive.

But there was another India on whose deaf ears Gandhi’s words also fell. It was the India in which caste was the essence of power and wherein prejudice was the theme song of man. It was an illiterate and obstinate India, large in space, small in heart. It felt that if caste were abolished there would be little left for men and women to do. This India would not yield nor would it budge.

Among those who believed in and worked for the removal of untouchability there was a difference of opinion regarding the means to be employed to achieve this end.

The untouchable leader, Columbia-educated Dr. Ambedkar, an untouchable himself who became a member of the Viceroy’s Council, believed that the rights and privileges of the untouchables should be written into the future constitution for India, so that in a free India the caste Hindu could never again deprive the untouchable of his basic rights. He maintained that the untouchables should have special representation

and a piece of political power and economic security should be reserved for them. They should have a certain fixed number of seats in the legislatures so that their voices could always be heard.

Gandhi took another view. He regarded special representation as a perpetuation of the untouchable's inferior status. It would give the untouchables political security but they would always remain untouchable. It would be impossible for them to be absorbed by the greater Hindu community to which they belonged and from which they had sprung. It would give a permanent and official recognition to a distinction in social class which had originated from an unfortunate combination of circumstance and superstition, and which would eventually disappear, while the distinction written into a constitution would survive.

These were the two main attitudes to the removal of untouchability. It was for the untouchable to decide which he preferred. It was he who had suffered. While Gandhi wielded a great influence over Hindu India, the untouchable had sufficient reason to anticipate the behavior of the caste Hindu when Gandhi was gone.

While Gandhi called them *harijans*, which meant "children of God," there were still many millions of bigoted Hindus who looked upon their own fellow men as untouchable.

That was the depressing aspect of the problem. It was another instance of our limitation. Even so, when one bore in mind that, despite only twelve per cent literacy compared with the 94 per cent in "God's own country"—the United States—in a quarter of a century we had succeeded in opening to the *harijans* a great many temples as well as the home and heart of every intelligent educated man, the indication was that un-

touchability would be wiped out in India long before America shed its prejudice against the Negro.

There are also other points of difference between untouchability in India and the Negro problem in the United States.

We do not push our untouchables into Jim Crow buses, trolleys and trains.

We do not lynch an untouchable because he has slept with a caste Hindu girl.

We are aware of the problem. We are not like children afraid of the dark.

We do not brandish the four freedoms.

We have no Statue of Liberty, standing unashamed outside our harbors.

We have no Lincoln Memorial.

We are aware of our limitations.

The Brahmins of India with all their prejudice are comparatively unaggressive as a class. Often they content themselves with bathing. Their attitude is conditioned by their illiteracy. That of the copperheads south of the Mason-Dixon line resembles the attitude of the Nazi to the Jew. It is the attitude of a boor.

It is aggressive.

It justifies itself.

It allows no arguments.

Once I said to an American, "Didn't Lincoln say all men were created equal and didn't you put up a memorial to him?"

"Sure we did. He didn't say all men had to be treated equal."

Morons talk like that.

7

A year after Maiji died, war broke out in Europe. I was listening to the B.B.C. when the news came over the air. The soft lush tones of the *Capriccio Italien* died as the announcer told an anxious world that Hitler had crossed the Polish frontier. Then Mr. Chamberlain, in a voice tinged with emotion, declared that Britain was at war with Germany.

The Luftwaffe was soon over London and war had become a naked reality. In spite of all our differences with the British, it was evident that it would be difficult to stay out of the war, for greater issues were involved. One could not look upon the war only as an Indian. The difficulty, however, was that the issue of supporting Britain was linked up with the issue of our political freedom. Could a nation which was itself unfree fight for the freedom of others? Could a people long enslaved fight for their oppressors?

The early declaration of the Congress had condemned Nazi aggression. Jawaharlal Nehru had said he would like "to see India play her full part and throw her resources into the struggle for the new order." But the Congress wanted some assurance that the principles, for which we were called upon to fight, would also be applied to us and that at the end of the war we should share in the triumph of democracy.

Britain was reluctant to commit herself. The attitude of officialdom in India was timid, frightened and clumsy. Although popular ministries functioned in all

the provinces of India, the Viceroy committed India to the war in a bald statement which read: "I, Victor Alexander John Hope, Marquess of Linlithgow, Governor-General of India and ex-officio Vice-Admiral therein, being satisfied thereof by information received by me, do hereby proclaim that war has broken out between His Majesty and Germany."

India, therefore, first heard that it was at war with Germany through this statement in the *Gazette Extraordinary* on September 3rd, 1939. Nothing could have been more clumsy. Nothing could have irritated the Indians more. The Congress resigned from the ministries and the responsibility of government was taken over by the governors who thereafter ruled by edicts under an emergency act.

The days which followed felt heavy for there was a perpetual conflict of loyalties. As Hitler struck blow after blow in Europe and the bastions of democracy staggered and fell, we felt for the little people of the world who cried for our help. But we also felt for the self-respect of our own people whose day of liberation was not yet in sight.

Political parties in India played for time. While the Congress protested formally, it was eager to help if only it could do it consistently with its self-respect. Jawaharlal Nehru offered to organize guerrillas to defend the eastern frontier from the Japs. A gesture from Britain was eagerly awaited. It was not forthcoming. Many of us, younger men, did not know which way to turn.

One day, we were discussing in our office what our attitude should be, for a newspaper was always a good barometer of Indian thought and opinion. Someone said, "I know I should feel sorry for the British but

that feeling is dead inside me. Defeat is always sorrowful to watch whether in friend or foe. But I tell you it is nemesis."

"Do you think Hitler will invade Britain?" I asked.

"I don't know," one of the older subeditors replied. "On paper he should. They say the British navy is still there and that the British will fight to the bitter end to defend their homeland. But that will not be the criterion." His voice echoed in the silence in which we heard him. Then in a quiet, deliberate tone he said, "There is a legend that clings to Britain, which says it is invincible. Hitler believes that legend and you will see he will succumb."

"What if it comes to a showdown?"

"No, Britain won't lose the war. Nor do I want Britain to lose, for Nazi Germany will be a worse hell for man. But before Britain wins, she must be properly shaken. That's what I want to see. I want to see the British win but only after they've been pushed to the wall."

"How should we react?"

"You ask a difficult question. On principle we should stand aloof. It won't make any difference to the British. They will take what they want from us. They have enough powers under the Defense of India acts. But material support is not enough in a losing war. The British need our moral support. They'll want to buy it on a post-dated check. My head tells me we should act on principle and stay aloof. My heart tells me to fight."

"Which will prevail?"

"If only someone but Hitler were on the other side, I could answer your question easier. But the choice is between two evils. Britain is anathema to me, but what

is the alternative? How can one allow the Nazi idea to grip the world?"

"That doesn't answer my question."

"I can't answer the question I put to myself every morning when I read the news. The trouble is there is too much *iman* in us. We are the sort of people who don't hit our worst enemy when he is down. Our tradition is never to stab a man in the back."

That day the phrase "a stab in the back" was first used in our office. Later it headed a first editorial in our paper against the declared policy of the Congress. We were a nationalist paper. In face of the Congress attitude it was a difficult position to maintain.

A few days later there came the news of Dunkirk.

Dunkirk was defeat. There were many Indians who smirked when they heard of the hurried British retreat. No one could blame the Indians for their bitterness. They remembered the British at Amritsar. They remembered the long record of being held down by armed might. They remembered the struggle which had been grim and hard. They had memories and scars which still felt sore.

In a bus, the conductor was punching tickets. A gust of wind caught one of these little pieces of paper and it flew away. An illiterate and uneducated Indian said in an undertone to the conductor, "Like a Dunkirk hero your ticket has run away." There was a trace of mockery on his face.

It was not the Indian's fault that he regarded Dunkirk as sordid and cowardly. The great machinery of propaganda and information had forced him to come to that conclusion. It had tried to pass off Dunkirk as a withdrawal according to plan.

Propaganda in India was bad. The men who con-

ducted it were afraid. Nobody seemed to understand that even the oppressed could fight for their oppressors if there was a motive worth while. But propaganda in India made only one appeal. Join the armies, it said, and get four square meals a day. The army gives you good food and good pay. The army gives you *chapattis*, large wheaten cakes. That was the theme song of propaganda in India. The British believed that, at a price, loyalty and allegiance could still be bought from all Indians.

An Indian journalist, K. A. Abbas, writing at that time in *Sound Magazine*, declared:

Every week the walls of every important city and town in India are covered with red, black and yellow squares and oblongs of paper. They are the posters issued by the National War Front and other propaganda agencies of the government of India. Every day in newspapers, in all the different languages, appear black-and-white advertisements issued from the same source. Thousands of reams of paper, tons of printer's ink, gallons and gallons of glue, thousands of hours of human labor and millions of rupees of the taxpayers' money go into the production and publication and the pasting of these posters. Go round any city—Bombay, for instance—and see for yourself. Many of these posters are torn within twenty-four hours of their being put up, others are decorated with additional red stains where a passer-by has chosen to spit out his *pan* (betel-nut juice). Why?

Now I have seen government propaganda posters in England, prewar France, the United States, Turkey—to mention only the non-dictator countries—but I have never found any evidence of such a hostile attitude of the public towards them. Why? Because when a government, enjoying the confidence of the people, issues a poster, the people treat it with deference and read it carefully. When it is issued by... but need one rub in the obvious? The *pan* stains speak for themselves.

Picked at random from a mass of propaganda literature were a few headlines which spoke for themselves:

BELIEVING IN ENEMY BROADCASTS COST HIM
HIS LIFE SAVINGS

I LOST Rs.20,000/—BECAUSE I LISTENED
TO A RUMOUR

BUY DEFENSE SAVINGS CERTIFICATES
FOR PROFIT AND PROTECTION

Rs.3/9—GIVEN FOR EVERY Rs.20/—LENT

“Can you imagine,” Abbas continued, “a poster in Moscow reading, *I Lost 20,000 Roubles Because I Listened to Enemy Rumours*; or a poster telling the people of Chungking, *Buy Defense Savings Certificates for Profit*; or a poster in London saying, *Listening to Enemy Broadcasts Cost Him His Life Savings?*”

This was the reason why when the Indian tuned in his radio it was not to London he listened, nor to the All-India Radio, which by then had become a perfume spray. It was to Tokyo he listened. Tokyo told him the truth, he believed. Tokyo had told him that Dunkirk was defeat. Tokyo said. . . .

There was a time when the Berlin radio had dominated the air of Europe and Dr. Joseph Goebbels' perfect battery of supertransmitters was opposed only by Colonel Blimp, complete with his towel, wheeling a tin-horn gramophone in a ramshackle perambulator. It was the cartoon which David Low had drawn of propaganda in Britain. But with the September blitz a new conception of propaganda came to Britain and the B.B.C. came into undisputed command of the air.

It was realized that the voice of the common man was the most reassuring message for a nation to hear.

Those of us who were interested in propaganda as a means of harnessing the energies of a country to the war effort of the democracies, watched these changes from a distance. We saw this little island of Britain become overnight the last bastion of democracy, and a "nation of shopkeepers" become crusaders in the war for the liberation of humanity. We saw the common man of that little country rise above the prejudices which had tormented him and fight for his home, his country and his people. We listened to the broadcasts of Wickham Steed, always smacking his lips whether he was tasting victory or defeat, for he echoed the voice of those little people who were inspired to fight. Over the B.B.C. we heard the words of Winston Churchill, the muted groans of those who were buried in the blitz, the cries of little children frightened in the dark, the wailing of women—all inspiring the living to carry on the fight.

There was nothing like that in India. The government of India was more or less oblivious to the implication of total war. A stodgy bureaucracy tried to carry on the government by edicts. Mediocre men found "placed" jobs, because mediocre men were "reliable." Businessmen of no special ability got pushed into the forefront of public life. Indian national leaders were generally reluctant to participate in any war effort. No one wanted to shoulder any responsibility because the whole system of administration was vitiated by the evil habit of shelving decisions—the result of a highly specialized technique of thinking up difficulties. The Viceroy's wife was still seen going shopping escorted by police cars and all traffic came to a standstill for her

Ladyship even though the Queen of England had denied herself this privilege.

Some of us, therefore, began to feel a growing sense of frustration at the things that were happening around us.

The late Mr. Wendell Willkie understood our feelings when he said:

Men need more than arms to fight and win this kind of war. They need enthusiasm for the future and a conviction that the flags they fight under are in bright clean colors. . . . Especially here in Asia the common people feel that we have asked them to join us for no better reason than that the Japanese rule would be even worse than Western Imperialism. . . . This [Asia] is a continent where the record of the Western democracies has been long and mixed but where people—and remember there are a billion of them—are determined no longer to live under foreign control. Freedom and opportunity are the words which have modern magic for the people of Asia, and we have let the Japanese steal these words from us and corrupt them to their own use.*

British statesmanship, resurrected from the debacle of Munich and the days of appeasement, did not bother to understand the Indian mind. Caught, moreover, unprepared for World War II, Britain was too engrossed in home defense to be properly aware of the need for adequately defending other parts of the empire. The best brains of England were tackling the problems of the little island fortress, of her European neighbors, of Russia, but leaving the East to fend for itself.

It was during this feeling of frustration that I read one morning in the papers of the arrival in India of the great Generalissimo of China, Chiang Kai-shek. He

* In a statement made to the foreign and Chinese press at Chungking, October 7, 1942. Reprinted from *One World*, by permission of Simon and Schuster, Inc. (copyright, 1943, by Wendell L. Willkie).

had come to India on a military and political mission.

That was news.

Could he, I asked myself, find for us the link which would bind us to the chain of democracies?

The Generalissimo made a state entry into New Delhi, as the Prince of Wales had done in Calcutta twenty-one years before him. There was a striking similarity between the two arrivals. Like the Prince of Wales, Chiang came on a bright Indian morning and in a car which glided majestically past Kingsway and the war memorial arch. Again a plucky little Union Jack whipped from the radiator cap and a long line of troops stood rigidly at attention.

But in that highly polished car there was no future English monarch. In it, said Bill Fischer of *Time*, was a man who by the old standards of empire was only "a native" but who by the new was one of the half dozen most important men in the world—Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.

What a change had come over the world, the Indians thought, that Edward was in exile while a Chinese was receiving the salute of an empire!

The Generalissimo came and went and little seemed to have happened, or if anything did happen, it was withheld from us. Not till Jawaharlal Nehru arranged a press conference did we get a glimpse of "our valiant neighbor." It was obvious to the more alert among us that a man who was the spearhead of China's resistance for so many long years had not come to India to experience the pleasant and innocuous sensation of walking on red carpet. High officials at Delhi to whom I pointed out the possibilities afforded by his presence in our midst, replied in the usual manner of bureaucracy that it was all very difficult.

I then asked for permission to go on a brief visit to China. By a strange combination of circumstances the government agreed, though it was never a well-guarded official secret that the departments of Home and External Affairs viewed my visit with diffidence and even suspicion.

However, I did go to China. I carried-with me the credentials of the government of India, for I was to broadcast for the government-controlled All-India Radio. I also arranged that the right contacts would be available for me in Chungking, knowing as I did that a word from Jawaharlal Nehru to "the right people" at the other end would be more valuable than all the stamped and crested stationery of the government of India.

Nehru's name opened every Chungking door to me, right wing, left wing and center. Everyone told me so much that the publication of even a small part of what I was told almost caused a diplomatic incident. An embarrassed Chinese government officially protested about my writings and broadcasts through diplomatic channels to the British Embassy and to the government of India. I had said too blatantly in my dispatches that the Kuomintang was more concerned with fighting the Chinese Reds than with the war against Japan. I had attacked Chiang's commander-in-chief, General Ho Ying-chin, who would not let Allied medical supplies reach the Chinese Red Army for whom they were intended. I had indicated that part of lend-lease aid to China was being diverted to political purposes instead of being used against the enemy. So I was rubbed off the air and my bi-weekly broadcasts came abruptly to an end. I discovered later that there had been an official protest against my broadcasts by the Chinese Govern-

ment to the government of India through the British Embassy at Chungking.

What I thought of the Chinese political scene is not, however, relevant to this narrative. The important thing was that seeing the Chinese fight made a profound impression on me. It influenced my attitude towards the war. It did not, however, make me lose sight of the unsatisfactory status of our country or forget that we were an unfree people called upon to fight for the freedom of others.

"Let us be quite clear on this point," I said to an Englishman. "Those of us who have come forward to do our little bit in the war haven't done it for the mercenary gains your propaganda offers. It is not the speeches of your governors and viceroys that have made an appeal to us. It is the call of small people in small places which we are answering. In spite of all the things that have happened during the one hundred and fifty years of British rule, we cannot stand aloof in a war in which humanity as a whole is involved."

"What made you change?" he asked me.

I remembered the incident that had made me come to a decision. It had happened in Chungking. I was walking up the hill to Chialing House with Douglas Wilkie, an Australian war correspondent. It was evening. The sun was setting on the river below. We walked up to the top and stood on the terrace of that only hotel in China's wartime capital. We stood there for a long time looking at the bombed houses sprinkled sparsely over the green-gray of the hills around us. Below, the Chialing River curved through the valley with little boats, like gondolas, gliding on its placid waters. On the banks I could see little dots that were Chinese boatmen and laborers. They were trudging

and pulling heavy loads, probably of rice and munitions, transplanting them from one part of China to another. Shortage of gas had made transportation difficult.

I watched these little moving dots which were once the flesh and blood of China. In five long years of war they had become skin and bone. They had given of their blood, sweat, toil and tears. I turned to Wilkie and said, "How can I take my vengeance on humanity merely because I bear a grudge towards a handful of Englishmen?"

"So it is with a certain mental reservation that you support the war," the Englishman said when I recounted the incident.

"Naturally," I replied.

"How can there be any doubt in your mind with the Nazi and the Jap as the alternatives to the British?"

"Have you ever had to choose between the devil and the deep sea?"

"Well," he said. "Really!"

But then, Englishmen always said, "Well, really!" on occasions like these.

"Some of your countrymen too have helped to bring us into the war," I added.

"Churchill?" he asked.

"No. The men of Dunkirk, the people of Southampton and Coventry—the common man of England."

"Dunkirk?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes. It was a *New York Times* editorial that first interpreted Dunkirk to me."

I had a copy of the editorial in my file, though by nature I am not a clipper. I read a part of it to him.

So long as the English tongue survives [the *New York Times* said] the word Dunkirk will be spoken with rever-

ence. For in that harbor, in such a hell as never blazed before, at the end of a lost battle, the rags and blemishes of democracy fell away. There, beaten but unconquered, in shining splendor she faced the enemy. They sent away the wounded first. Men died that others could escape.

It was not so simple a thing as courage, which the Nazis had in plenty.

It was not so simple a thing as discipline which can be hammered into men by a drill sergeant.

It was not the result of careful planning because there could have been little.

It was the common man of the free countries rising in all his glory out of mill, office, factory, mine, farm and ship, applying to war the lessons learned when he went down the shaft to bring back trapped comrades, when he hurled the lifeboat through the surf, when he endured poverty and hard work for his children's sake.

This shining thing in the souls of free men Hitler cannot command or attain, or conquer. He has crushed it where he could from German hearts.

It is the great tradition of democracy.

It is the future.

It is victory.*

"That is very beautiful," the Englishman said to me. "Very beautiful."

"It is a little different from your propaganda which says to the Indian 'Join the Army because the Army gives you good food and good pay,' which, incidentally, the Army doesn't. The food is lousy and the pay is low."

The Englishman was piqued. He retorted, "Do you think the peasants and office boys of India to whom our recruitment is directed would understand the language of the *New York Times*? Two square meals a day is what they want, not the 'shining thing in the souls of free men.' "

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"Do I look as if I need two square meals a day?"

"Not you perhaps, but the great majority do."

"The point is, do they need them enough to lay down their lives?"

There was a pause, after which he said, "I see you are very anti-British."

"You have so few friends," I said. "You don't even know who they are."

The Englishman in India is like a proverb. You cannot argue with a proverb.

There was another reason why some of us wanted India in the war. It occurred to me in Chungking when I went to see the Red general, Chou En-lai. Chou En-lai was one of the triumvirate who dominated the Communists of China. My first meeting with the Chinese Reds was in the pages of Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*. Their story had made fascinating reading. There were three of them, Mao Tse-tung, Chu Teh and Chou En-lai. Of these only the last named was in Chungking. The other two were in Yen-an, and the government of Chiang Kai-shek was not very keen on letting foreign correspondents into the hideout of Red China.

I contented myself with seeing Chou. In his blue serge suit, he looked more like a Paris salesman than a Red general. He was too young to be a general, but among Chinese Reds youth was no bar to the assumption of leadership. Unlike Communists in other parts of the world, Chou was very cool and collected. He never allowed himself to be ruffled even though his soul appeared perpetually restless. He was very humble.

We talked about China that day in his little shack on the mountainside, many miles away from Chungking. We talked of Chiang Kai-shek and Chou explained to

me the cause of Chiang's hold over the country. Chou was intensely real, matter-of-fact, balanced and practical. He was more than a party leader. He was a visionary looking into the future. He was one of those laying the foundation of a world based on ideology.

I asked Chou about India. At that time the negotiations between the Indian leaders and Sir Stafford Cripps, representing the government of Mr. Churchill, had broken down. Young Indians like me found themselves in the peculiar position of having to choose between our loyalty based on nationalism and ordinary human feelings. We felt for those other people in the world who were fighting with their backs to the wall.

"Under the present circumstances," I asked Chou, "what would you say India should do?"

"Fight!" he said without a moment's hesitation. "Get armed and fight."

I looked askance at him.

"If India fights," he went on, "she becomes a fact. The Chinese Red Army is a fact."

At that time Jawaharlal Nehru had talked of organizing guerrillas. Chou liked the idea. An expert himself in this kind of warfare, Chou saw the spirit of resistance spreading like wildfire over an emotional country like India. He saw the possibility of such an army fighting, one day, for the freedom of its own people.

As I tramped my way back over the hills I kept repeating Chou's words, "Fight! If India fights she becomes a fact."

Fight!

If India fights she becomes a fact.

Fight!

If India fights . . .

Fight!

In Burma a year later I first saw my countrymen fight. The ordinary day-to-day happenings of the Burma and the Arakan fronts are not exciting enough to be reproduced here. Unlike the battle for Stalingrad and the blitz over London, where every moment was exciting, there was perhaps not enough sustained dramatic action to report. In Burma the war was slow-moving and long drawn out. It was the story of the taking of one hill-feature and the bombing of another. All this can become monotonous after a time. As each day ended in the jungle you remembered only that the sun had beaten down all day and the dust had blown into your eyes, nose and face. Then evening fell. A cool breeze from the valley came towards you. Night crept into the sky and spread its mantle over the Burmese *oberland*. Sometimes the moon appeared in the sky. Stars came to earth in the shape of fireflies. "The gorgeous East," you sighed to yourself as you turned over in your camp bed and your tired limbs ached. You looked forward to nothing more than a night of rest, for every morrow brought only another day of sweat and dust.

But there was another story in Burma. It was a human story of men in a gruelling test of endurance. It was a story of character, which proved to be one of the important factors in the winning of the Burma war.

It was not an easy thing to live month after month in those infested Burmese jungles, away from one's home and one's people. It was not pleasant to go for weeks without a bath in the dustiest of terrain. It was not very enjoyable to eat Spam at mess almost every day of the week and to eat dust on the road. At night, after a hard and tiring day, it was not exactly restful to have to battle with flies and mosquitoes and to sleep day

after day on the rough terrain. Most of all it was a little sad for our Indian soldiers to feel they belonged to the army of a country that was not yet free.

I asked myself what was it that made those Indians in the jungle fight the way they did for those who had been their overlords for more than 150 years. They were not fighting at the point of the sword. They were not conscripted. They were volunteers. It was true that the Indian soldier often joined the army because it offered him a job. But it was difficult to regard him as belonging to an army of mercenaries, for mercenaries never did so much for so little.

The answer was that the Indian soldier fought for his *izzat*. *Izzat* does not necessarily imply loyalty and patriotism. Its peculiar shade of meaning is difficult to explain in a single English word. A man fighting for *izzat* fights as he thinks a man of his country is expected to fight. *Izzat* implies both self-respect and one's respect in the eyes of his fellow men.

There was another reason. Many believed that, with all its faults, the democratic way of living was the only one worth while and that, properly developed, it was the only way of life that would bring peace and greatness and dignity to the civilized world.

The ordinary Indian soldier did not think quite in these terms. He had a vague idea of righteousness but often he could not understand or express it accurately. But many Indian fighting men of the officer class believed that after the war there would follow a reorientation of ideas and policies and an overhauling of social systems all over the world. They hoped a revolution of the mind would follow in the logical course of events and that the thought of the common people, as distinct from the dogmatism of class, would dominate. In their

minds there was a certain feeling that the war was being fought for the preservation of ordinary decent living, which educated, intelligent Indians believed was worth fighting for.

I saw something of this enlightened Indian soldier when I went to stay with a Vengeance dive-bomber squadron of the Royal Indian Air Force in Burma.

I arrived at the squadron a little after midday and was shown to the orderly room which was nothing more than a *basha* of bamboo and straw. The adjutant took me to the commanding officer, who was an Indian. The C.O. was a squadron leader and he wore wings. He had joined the Royal Indian Air Force when that force was very young. In Burma, under his command, were both Indian and British personnel—a sign of the changing times. Predominantly, however, the squadron was Indian. It had done so well that it had been singled out for mention for its operational flights over Burma.

The squadron leader was a shortish, squarely built young man in his early thirties. His manner and gait was the same as that of a typical Indian army officer. He was a little reserved, always kept his dignity and yet contrived to be friendly. He had a quiet sense of humor and laughed with restraint. He had a little mustache which he twirled when he was thinking. Soldiering was more than a career to him. It was his life. He took it very seriously.

From the orderly room I was taken to the officers' mess. As the squadron leader and I arrived, the men rose to attention and remained standing till we had sat down. That little touch of discipline was pretty to watch.

The boys knew who I was, what I had written and what I stood for. They liked me because I was one of

them, an Indian. From the very first day they were kind, hospitable and extremely friendly. From me they wanted news of the outside world, of the cities they knew and of the people they had not seen for a long time. Were there any new books? Any new pictures? What was happening in India socially, culturally, politically? More than anything else they wanted to know when we as a people would be free.

They seldom talked of themselves. They were shy of speaking of their own adventures. There was a spirit of camaraderie among them. They had an unbelievable respect both for their fellow officers and for the men who worked and fought under them. They had an even greater love for the service to which they belonged. If they were proud that they belonged to the air force, they were even prouder that it was an Indian air force. It was an air force of Indians conscious of their country, their heritage and all the things that went to make up this land of ours.

That was the way our young men were developing in the war.

In Burma we saw the first Indian operational brigadier, the equivalent of the United States one-star general. There had been an Indian brigadier before him but the first to lead a brigade in action was K. S. Thimmayya.

I knew Timmy from 1935. He was then a captain posted at the fort at Madras, to which town my father was transferred. My earliest recollection of Timmy was at an early morning ceremonial parade held in honor of some English stooge who was taking the salute.

The parade was on the long drive of the Marina, facing the sea. In his solar-topee, his khaki shorts, Timmy

with his powerful voice yelled, "Commmpannnnnnnnie Preeeezent Arms."

Thuck! The British-controlled Indian Army clicked like a machine.

I wondered at the time what would happen if war ever broke out and Timmy, charming as he was, had to go to a real war. He was so spick and span, he always gave one the impression that he had joined the army just to keep fit for his tennis.

Those were the days when no one took an Indian army officer seriously; the army in India was regarded as somewhat of a joke, a pastime for those of our men who would otherwise have been unemployed.

These soldiers often came to my father's home, for we kept open house. Without any notice, two or three of them would drive up the garden in Timmy's red Lancia and hoot.

"Can we come in?" they would ask. "Can we stay to dinner? Will the dinner stretch?"

They were always welcome, for such was the atmosphere of our home wherever it was. It was humble but hospitable. No one ever forgot its friendliness, its lack of formality and its youthful atmosphere.

We used to rag Timmy, saying his job was only to fire dud salutes for a lot of bogus English and Oriental gentlemen, for Timmy was in charge of the battery at Madras. My sister challenged him one day to fire a salute for her as she was leaving by train on a short holiday. Timmy accepted the challenge. As her train was about to leave, the guns roared in salute. Timmy had ordered special practice at that hour.

When war broke out, Timmy was a major. Burma gave him the opportunity which his peacetime job did not. He rose quickly till one day, due to the exigencies

of war, he acted for his brigadier. Lord Louis Mountbatten, the supreme commander of Southeast Asia, saw him in the field. The Supremo's mind worked differently from those of the brass hats who filled high posts in the regular Indian Command. On his return from the front Mountbatten moved on his own initiative to make Timmy a regular brigadier and before long Brigadier Thimmayya was wearing red tabs, a crown and three stars.

More than personal feelings were involved in this incident—as was to be seen from the way Indian ranks craned their necks out of troop carriages to salute *their* brigadier.

One day Timmy was again on ceremonial parade. General Claude Auchinleck was inspecting his men. Under Timmy were a number of British colonels and lieutenant colonels.

Auchinleck arrived. The usual ceremonial followed. Auchinleck left.

But that evening, an old Indian V.C.O. (Viceroy's Commissioned Officer), one of the regular veterans of the army in India who had probably joined the services as batman polishing the shoes of some English colonel, remarked to his Indian major, "*Huzoor, mai-ne pucchis sal nokri ki lekin aj pahle din mai-ne ingrez leftenant-kernelon ko ek Hindustani brigadier ko salute karte dekha.*"

There was music in those words, for the old Indian soldier was saying, "Sir, I have served in this army for twenty-five years but today for the first time I saw English lieutenant colonels salute an Indian brigadier."

It was the flowering of a nation that was regaining its self-respect.

I could hear the voice of Chou saying to me from that lone mountain in Chungking, "Fight! Get armed and fight. If India fights she becomes a fact."

The Congress, however, gave a different lead to the country. Gandhi had taken a firm stand on nonviolence. He would not support this or any other war.

The early attitude of the Congress was one of neutrality. While it would not hinder the war effort, it refrained from giving Britain any moral or material help, because Britain had not declared its war aims in terms of India to the satisfaction of the Congress.

Gandhi had first said there was to be no mass civil disobedience. Only token disobedience was offered by chosen individuals who broke the law, disobeyed the government and courted arrest, merely to keep the spirit of resistance alive.

By 1942 this position materially altered. Disappointed with the British attitude of refusing, even in the most critical hour, to part with power, the Congress, at the stormy meeting held in Bombay in the August of that year, passed the famous August resolution. The Congress no longer felt justified in holding the nation back from asserting its will. It resolved to sanction the starting of "a mass struggle on nonviolent lines on the widest possible scale."

That was the gist of the August resolution.

Some of us knew which way the wind was blowing in the discussions of the Congress before the resolution came to the open session.

In our office was a staunch follower of Gandhi and the Congress. He had an uncanny political instinct which was seldom wrong. More than any other individual I knew he understood the working of Gandhi's

mind. He was also the barometer of Congress thought and opinion.

On those nights when we were both on late duty I sipped hot tea with him, discussed a variety of political subjects and learned a lot from him. One night I told him of the misgivings with which I viewed Gandhi's new attitude.

"There is nothing new in Gandhi's attitude," he said. "It is based on his nonviolence."

"How can one speak of nonviolence in the midst of total war?"

"At what other time should one speak of it? Nonviolence to be fully tried must be put to the severest test."

"Hitler and the Japs are different from the British," I said. "Behind the British government there was always the conscience of the people. That factor does not come into play with the Nazis and the Japanese. Don't you see what Hitler has done to the Jews?"

"How do you know that these stories of Jewish persecution are true? They may only be British propaganda." Like many Indians, he had come to a stage when he was unwilling to concede anything to the British, not even the benefit of a doubt.

We talked that night of the resolution and of the reception it would receive.

"Do you think Jawahar will support it?" I asked.

"In the end Jawahar always does what Gandhi wants."

"With his international outlook how can he support it? What about his international socialism? Is he going to fold up on his convictions?"

"Jawahar may have convictions. Every intelligent man has. But in terms of Gandhi, Jawahar reacts emo-

tionally. Gandhi has a firm hold on Jawahar's heart. Of course, Jawahar won't give in without a fight. He'll fret at first. Madame Chiang's appeals for help to China will tug at the strings of his heart. He'll pace the floor of his room and spend one or two sleepless nights. Then he'll come to the Working Committee and make a long speech on the conflict within him. He'll tell Gandhi and the others how much he feels for China and Russia. They'll listen to him because he is Jawaharlal but nothing will change the ultimate decision. Right or wrong, the Congress will go with Gandhi and Gandhi's attitude is very clear."

"That means Congress, however indirectly, will support the fascist cause."

"No, my friend. It all depends where you put the accent. The driving force behind the Congress is not love for fascism."

"What else is it?"

"If you want it bluntly, it is the growing hatred of the British. The Congress wants to be anti-British in any event, even if it results in an indirect advantage to the fascist idea. But the Congress has no love for fascism. When the British were flirting with the dictators, conniving with Mussolini on Abyssinia and with Japan on Manchuria, the Congress had condemned such wanton aggression on defenseless people. There are Congress resolutions to prove this. Today the British have changed. They have declared themselves champions of freedom and democracy and against fascism because fascism is endangering their own vested interests. The Congress is willing to fight provided India is free. There is a Congress resolution which has sanctioned the use of violence in the defense of India. The Congress's participation in war is not held up by

Gandhi's nonviolence, but by the British attitude towards us. That is the point at issue."

As I listened to him, I knew it was not an individual speaking to me. In the quiet stillness of a warm summer night he voiced the feelings of a whole country, for those were the feelings of the country. However hard I tried to disbelieve it, there was little doubt which way the Congress would vote on the resolution. Gandhi would carry the day. Once again he was to dominate the scene.

"What do you think will follow?" I asked, accepting his better judgment.

"They will arrest the leaders," he replied in a calm, matter-of-fact sort of way. "The war will go on. It will make no material difference to the war effort. Under the powers they have, the government can do anything in an emergency. Only British prestige will suffer a little damage. The effect, if any, will be psychological."

"Do you anticipate any violence?"

"Gandhi will insist on nonviolence. So long as he is free, the struggle will remain substantially a nonviolent struggle. But if Gandhi is in jail, there is no knowing what the people will do without him."

"What do you think they'll do?"

"I suppose a train or two will be derailed. Some ammunition dump will get blown up. Slogans like 'Quit India' will be shouted all over the country. There'll be emotional violence. A few heads will be broken. What else can happen?"

"That's what I want to know. How far will the people go this time?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "One never can tell what hidden strength there is in a people, however feeble-

and emaciated they may appear physically. Moral strength when translated into physical action can be frightening."

So came August 7th, 1942, and Jawaharlal Nehru of all persons moved the resolution. The inference was that Jawahar had changed his opinion. But as I sat on the matting in the open session, my legs crossed, and listened to Jawahar speak, I felt sad within me. My view was that Jawahar had sacrificed his individual judgment to the emotional appeal which Gandhi made on him. The emotion had proved stronger.

Between May when Jawahar had felt that to accept Gandhi's attitude would be playing into Jap hands and August when he moved the "Quit India" resolution, the political crisis had deepened the bitterness towards the British. Jawahar was merely reflecting the bitterness he shared with many millions of his countrymen.

"This is the triumph of Gandhi and nonviolence," a fellow journalist said to me during Jawahar's speech. But it was not nonviolence which had triumphed. It was accumulated anti-British feeling which had broken loose. The mood of the country was that it did not matter who else got hurt, so long as we got even with the British. This bitter hatred had too long been held in check by Gandhi's nonviolence.

To me, nonviolence, great as it was as an ideal, seemed futile in terms of Stalingrad, Dunkirk and the blitz over London. In contrast to that grim battle which those people were fighting with their backs to the wall, the unfurling of a flag in Bombay and the shouting of a slogan in Calcutta appeared a little childish.

But I was in a small minority. The great articulate majority had spoken with one voice. To them Gandhi

was the beacon which lit the dark road. Whether he was right or wrong, they were ready to follow him.

Outside the Congress *pandal*, which was a large tent, a young Indian was excitedly explaining to an American war correspondent why Gandhi had triumphed. The Indian said, "Mister, if Gandhi were to say the sun is the moon, we would accept that also."

"But Jawaharlal?" asked the American.

"What is Jawahar in comparison to Gandhi? Jawahar is one man. Gandhi is India."

The American did not understand that.

I did. That's why I was a little afraid.

Dawn had not broken on the morning of the ninth when the familiar police van arrived at Birla House, where Gandhi was staying.

That morning Gandhi was taken to Poona and parked in an old-fashioned country house which was the Aga Khan's dilapidated palace.

Other Congress leaders were arrested the same morning and spirited away to the various jails, which dotted the land.

There was no trial and no hearing. Not so much as a formal charge was framed against them. They were all detained *during His Majesty's pleasure*, which is the correct legal phrase.

"Say, George," I said over the phone to one of the boys at the United States Office of War Information, "can we make lunch another day?"

"Yeah," he said, "suits me fine. I'm up to my neck in our new ads."

"What are you selling now?"

"The Four Freedoms," he said. "Some guy in Washington sure had a bright idea."

8

The outside world heard but little of what happened in India in the days that followed.

The press was gagged by an ordinance which forbade the publication of any news of the police and the military clashing with the people. A strong censorship was exercised over all Indian news which was embarrassing to the government. In preference to submitting their columns to censorship, many nationalist papers published no news at all. While the government told its tale in an official pamphlet which was given wide publicity, the Indians were denied the opportunity of saying anything at all.

There is an old proverb which says, "It is more dangerous to stop the mouth of the people than to dam the mouth of a river."

Three years later, when the war was over and censorship was lifted, there trickled into the columns of the press the story of 1942.

In the *National Herald* of Lucknow, front-paged in its issue of December 5th, 1945, on the eve of the retirement of Sir Maurice Hallet, governor of the province, was the story of the districts of Ballia and Azamgarh which are in the United Provinces between North and Central India. It was told by the paper's Allahabad correspondent.

He narrated how a man was tied to the tail of an elephant and dragged along the road in front of the officials, how people were pierced with bayonets, how they

were made to stand naked on the road and whipped, how a collective fine of \$400,000 was levied by the government on the district of Ballia as a punishment, how forty-six persons were shot dead and many more badly wounded, how 105 homes were burned and about one hundred more razed to the ground.

Nearer home we had eye-witness accounts of what had happened in the suburbs of Bombay. Because a street in Matunga had been littered with stones and with the broken glass of soda bottles, the tenants in the houses on that street were ordered down from their homes by soldiers in charge of that area and made to sweep the streets clean of litter.

We heard the story one evening at dinner in our house. Dining with us that night was a college boy, a friend of my younger brother. My father with his usual caution had said, "It's dangerous to believe a story which may be nothing more than a mischievous rumor."

"When would you believe such a story?" my brother asked him.

"When I see it myself or hear it from someone who has swept the streets."

The young college boy, who had been quiet till then, shyly asked, "Would you believe me?"

"Yes," father said, "if it had happened to you."

"It has," the boy replied.

"What has?" my father asked.

"I was made to sweep the street," the boy calmly replied.

There was a hushed silence at the dinner table. My father tried to conceal his feelings but I noticed he had stopped eating.

"What were you doing there?" my father asked.

"I was on my way to college one morning to find out when it would reopen."

"But how did it happen?" my father persisted. "I don't understand."

"The idea was to teach us a lesson. It was quite a common form of punishment in those days. The military behaved like an army of occupation. There was a Bren gun carrier policing the streets. Everything in that locality was in a state of complete disorder with lamp-posts uprooted, trees cut down, shops closed and streets deserted. I first went to the college but found the gates locked. So I went to a teashop nearby to ask the man there if he had heard from any of the boys who frequented his shop when the college would reopen. He could not give me a definite answer. There was only one other person there, an elderly Hindu reading his paper over a cup of tea. Suddenly, two young Indians rushed into the shop. They appeared very agitated and hid themselves behind the cupboard in which the pastries were kept. Soon after that two armed soldiers came into the shop. They found the young men who were hiding and took them out. Then they asked the elderly Hindu and me to come out into the street. I was a little surprised and asked why. One of them said, 'Out!' in a rough manner. I refused. They grabbed hold of me and pushed me out of the shop. They ordered me to clean up the litter on the street and pile it on the adjoining footpath. I protested again and asked to see their captain. There was no captain. These two ordinary privates, wearing tin hats, were the supreme commanders."

"British soldiers?" my father interrupted.

"Yes, you know, ordinary tommies. They wore crossed keys on their shoulder flashes. Feeling utterly helpless, I had to do as I was told. Others were being rounded

up in the same street. Some twenty minutes later, while we were still sweeping up the litter, three more soldiers brought some other young men to join in the work."

"British soldiers?" my father asked in a feebler tone.

"Yes," the boy said, a little surprised at my father's constantly asking the same question.

"Go on," father said.

The boy continued, "They were all students of my college. When all was quiet one of the boys suddenly shouted '*Jai Hind!*' [Victory to India!] The soldier hit him in the ribs with the butt of his rifle. The boy yelled in agony. 'Get down and sweep, you bastard,' the tommy said. With one hand on his ribs the student bent down and continued to sweep the street."

"How long did this last?" father asked.

"About three-quarters of an hour. Then all of a sudden I was told I could go. I started to walk towards Matunga Station. But the soldiers told me I should go the other way. I told them my house was not in that direction. 'You heard, this way!' one of them said. So I obeyed. The others were still cleaning the streets."

When he finished, my father said, "I know how you feel, but you mustn't let it embitter you."

The young man looked at my father and said, "One day I'll get even with their kind."

"You are wrong. You mustn't judge all the English from a single incident."

There was a strange look on the boy's face, of sadness tinged with revenge. Then he said to my father, "Do you know what it feels like to be made to sweep a street at the point of a gun?"

My father said nothing in reply.

Other things happened in Matunga. One of the re-

porters in our office came in with the news that a boy of ten had been shot dead by a soldier.

"Why?" I asked.

"He threw a lump of horse dung at the soldier who was making his mother sweep the street."

"And then?"

"Then nothing. The boy died. The mother wept. What else can happen?"

But something had happened to India. It was difficult to describe it in words.

I thought of myself at the age of ten. All I had done was to wear a sailorsuit and sing "Rule, Britannia!"

In August, 1942, at that same age, another Indian boy, son of the common man, the fabric of which India was made, had died for throwing a lump of dung at a British soldier wearing a tin hat and armed with a rifle from which a bayonet flashed—a soldier who had humiliated an Indian woman who was his mother.

The significance of 1942 came to light much later. Anti-British feeling had seeped into the country as far as the remotest villages. While the reaction of people was often unplanned, unmapped and undefined, there were signs of a stiffening of resistance and a willingness to discard nonviolence.

Little men who had hitherto always bowed found a new courage within them. Little clerks who had led colorless lives, drudging long hours for the paltry sum of \$7 or \$8 a week, were found carrying sticks of dynamite to and from their daily work. Meek, innocuous-looking Indians offered their services for throwing a homemade bomb or for blowing up a troop train or a railway bridge. Yet not a few years ago these same men had, metaphorically speaking, been pushed off the pave-

ments. Unable to retaliate they had picked themselves up where they fell, dusted their clothes and without a murmur walked on. At sight of blood they would have fainted.

For the first time in the history of the Congress, Gandhi was presented on the eve of his arrest with a complete plan of action based on violence. The Working Committee never discussed that plan nor would Gandhi have accepted it. The fact remained that a section of the Congress, if permitted, was willing to take such a step.

On the evening of August 8th, realizing that they would be arrested, some of the younger Congress workers disappeared underground. They included Achut Patwardhan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Purshottam Tricumdas, and two women, Sucheta Kripalani and Aruna Asaf Ali.

There was one other figure, young in comparison with those belonging to the orthodox leadership of the Congress, who appeared on the underground scene. His name was Jayaprakash Narayan. Two years before August, 1942, he had been arrested, but he had escaped from prison and disappeared underground.

The name of Jayaprakash is not yet known outside India, for he is a new force that has emerged in Indian politics in recent years. Gandhi is said to have credited him with sufficient talent for national leadership if only he would not waver so much between nonviolence and violence. The trouble with Jayaprakash was that he was emotionally nonviolent but by political conviction he was more a Marxist than a Gandhian.

Jayaprakash had a fascinating background. He was a peasant's son who was reared in a little village in the province of Bihar and who saw a tramcar for the first

time in his life at the age of nineteen. Later, in search of learning, he went to America. There he lived for eight years and studied at five different universities. In order to live while he studied he worked long hours on the farms of California amid the grape and the vine. He gathered fruit, sorted baskets and packed boxes.

Elsewhere on that same continent he had worked as a mechanic in a shop and as a waiter in a small-town restaurant. When the day's work was over he read socialist literature and studied mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, economics and sociology.

Today his name means something in India. For many years he had been a menace to the Department of Law and Order and on the personal file of the Home Secretary in India, who during the British regime has always been an Englishman, he was listed as Political Danger No. 1.

While Jayaprakash is best at expounding the theory of socialism, he has an uncanny instinct for gauging the pulse of the people and the pace of a movement. He is an intellectual primarily and is very different in outlook from many other Congress leaders. He is not wrapped up in narrow sectarianism.

Jayaprakash is the founder of the socialist group of the Congress. But for the prejudice against his young age he would be more broadly acknowledged as one of the brains behind the Congress itself. The difference between him and the other Congress leaders is that while others talk of revolutions, nonviolent or otherwise, Jayaprakash has the tenacity to make a revolution possible. While veteran Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, party boss of the Congress and Gandhi's right-hand man in various civil disobedience movements, was good for organizing and exhorting the village peasant to defy the

government on the question of tax payment, Jayaprakash could operate on the broader canvas of India and cause more grievous mental, moral and physical damage.

After being at large for quite a while he was finally arrested on a train outside Amritsar. To the authorities who questioned him on his belief in violence he is reported to have said, "If I feel that violence is necessary I would use it again." It made his position a little different from those who did not do much more than shout a slogan or unfurl a flag.

The methods used in India during the disturbances of 1942-43 could hardly be described as nonviolent. They bore a strange resemblance to those of the underground in occupied Europe. Those who directed the underground movement in Europe through the programs of the B.B.C. hardly realized that the same programs were being listened to in India and used as a basis of instruction for sabotaging the British war effort here. It was ironical that the voice of Colonel Britton urging freedom-loving men to rise against their oppressors should have taught the Indians how to blow up bridges, how to make crude bombs, and how generally to disrupt and harass the means of communication. None of the great empire-builders who directed the programs of the B.B.C. thought it possible for a call to freedom and a call for action to reach the hearts of the little Indians. Brass hats in New Delhi had always assured brass hats in London that India was too illiterate to understand anything more than the language of two square meals a day, which was the language in which propaganda was couched and on which the British based their campaign of recruitment in India.

The result of the mental, moral and physical re-

sistance offered by this group of Indians was that in many parts of India the machinery of government was disorganized and ceased to function. In several places a state of anarchy prevailed and whole areas were given to brigandage. The crime wave rose. The police, unable to cope with it, disappeared.

Shorn of all forms of protection, the symbols of government having disappeared, the peasants and the people of the villages called upon their own native wisdom to defend themselves from the brigands and thugs, who tried to exploit the situation to their advantage. They reverted to the most primitive forms of government which had existed in India several hundred years ago.

In Satara, the land of Shivaji the Great and the scene of the great battles of Indian history, the people formed the *prati sarkar*, a parallel government. Satara was the heart of the Maratha tradition of heroism. It was the homeland of Shivaji's undefeated army, sparks of which lit up in the twentieth century. Geographically, Satara lies at the western limit of the Deccan tableland. It is 4,792 square miles in area and has a population of 1,400,000. There are 1,336 villages in Satara and six big towns. The district lapsed to the British in 1848.

The peasantry of Satara had a proud heritage of fearlessness. They would not brook injustice without protest. Satara was the focal point of the Maratha country and what the villages of Satara thought became in time the accepted norm of rural consciousness in the neighboring districts.

The story of this parallel government at Satara is told nowhere so well as in an article, anonymously written, in *Blitz* weekly from which I have borrowed material, and even language, with the kind permission of the editor. This article was written on the occasion of

the ceremony which took place in the village of Koregaon, where the Satara underground and members of the parallel government "discovered themselves" to Achut Patwardhan, the underground leader, on the latter's visit to the district.

The story of the *prati sarkar* reads like that of the Maquis in occupied France. The heroes of the Satara drama, like those of the Maquis, were little men of whom no one had ever heard. Among them were Nana Patil, Kisan Vir, Pandu Master and others. The word *patil* meant headman, but it was also a very common last name. *Kisan* meant peasant, and *master* connoted a man who could read and write. So that the heroes of Satara were John the Butcher, Peter the Blacksmith and George the Farmer. Yet these were the people who formed a parallel authority to the British government and who organized a state, which had all the essentials of a republic.

Nana Patil was the organizer of this new state though he was not aware of the important part he was playing. The first pictures of him which appeared in the local press showed him with a chubby round face. He wore a tight short coat which he found difficult to button, for he is fat and podgy. Instead of pants he wore a *dhoti* (six yards of cheesecloth). On his head he wore a turban tied in the typical Maharashtrian style. In his hand was a crude walking stick and he was ill at ease posing for a picture.

Pictures of the other men with him were likewise awkwardly posed. Some were wearing Gandhi caps but most of them were bare-headed and clad in the sort of clothes one picks up at a jumble sale. But there was character on their faces and a hungry look in their eyes.

Kisan Vir, Patil's lieutenant, had escaped from Yerowda jail with Pandu Master. Vir became known as "The Dictator" and he was mainly responsible for planning the destructive activities of the whole movement by giving them a constructive bias. Pandu Master, another of Patil's lieutenants, organized the Toofan Sena, which was the authorized police force of the new state.

Before August, 1942, there had been occasions when the people of Satara had spasmodically been awakened to political consciousness. The call of the Congress had reached them in 1930 and with the new vision which came to them with the awakening, they were able to know where they stood. There had once been a revolt at Belashi, an obscure village in Satara district. Some four hundred people had offered *satyagraha* by cutting a giant tree from the reserve forest area of the government and by putting up a huge flagstaff on which they hoisted the national flag. There had been the usual exchange of brickbats from the people and gunfire from the authorities. All this had happened as far back as July, 1931.

When news of the "Quit India" resolution reached Satara, the people were stirred and the peasants responded to the Congress's call of action with enthusiasm. In its initial stages the movement was nonviolent. But with the arrest of every provincial Congress-worker on the morning of the ninth, the people were left without a leader. They held meetings in as many villages as they could and conveyed the message of "Quit India" to every nook and corner of the district. Big meetings were held in Tasgaon, Karad, Walwe, Khanapur, Khatau Satara and Patan.

Then came the idea of leading *morchas* of peaceful,

unarmed peasants on the village *katcheris*, which were the symbols of British authority. To lead a *morcha* meant nothing more than to march, and a *katcheri* was the Indian word for a government office. The first *morcha* was organized in Karad on August 24th, 1942, about a fortnight after the arrest of the leaders. About one hundred people formed a procession and went to the *katcheri* of the mamlatdar, or petty revenue officer. The work of the *katcheri* was stopped. The national flag was hoisted on it and government officers were told to regard themselves as servants of the people in the true sense of the word. The speaker at this meeting was, of course, arrested and the meeting dispersed peacefully.

The second *morcha* was led on the *katcheri* of the mamlatdar at Patan which was also conducted peacefully. There was a third at Tasgaon. By now some twenty-five hundred people had gathered. The mamlatdar and his clerk were asked to stop their work and come out. They were given Gandhi caps to wear and were asked to hold the Congress flag and walk with the procession through the village. Since the mamlatdar obeyed the rebels, he was immediately degraded in rank by the government.

The fourth and most eventful of the district *morchas* was at Vaduj. More than one thousand people marched to the *katcheri*. This time the police opened fire even though the procession was unarmed and peaceful. The man who led the procession with a Congress flag in his hand was hit in the arm by a bullet, but he refused to budge and was hit three more times. But he stood there and held fast the flag which was still in his hand till he swooned and dropped. Two young lads who stood beside him were shot in the chest. Three others died on

the spot as a result of police firing and nearly forty were wounded, some of whom died later in hospital.

The article in *Blitz* then says:

The police kicked the dead bodies of these people who had fought so valiantly and fought in such a nonviolent manner.

After this, a regime of repression was let loose. 400 men were arrested. Villages were combed and villagers were harassed by the police in every possible way. On the following day, 7th September, 1942, a fifth *morcha* was organized in Islampur. Nearly 1,500 men had gathered. The Deputy Superintendent of Police was present on the scene when the Police opened fire. Pandya, an engineer at Kirloskerwadi, who had held the Congress flag in hand, was shot dead on the spot. Mr. Barbatte, his assistant, was also shot dead. Nearly a dozen people died. Four more were wounded. A young lad who received a bullet in the thigh had to get his foot amputated. Ten were arrested on the spot and some were beaten.

The firing at Islampur drove the movement underground. Police repression assumed such a virulent form that it was impossible for the Congress workers openly to carry on any political activity.

There was, however, a vital difference between the underground movement of Satara and elsewhere. In other provinces, those working underground had left their spheres of influence and isolated themselves from their own people to avoid the police. They were like trees uprooted from their natural soil and while they tried to organize resistance forces elsewhere, they had left the land in which their word was law. The results had naturally been disappointing. In Satara, however, those who went underground did not leave the district. They had won the confidence of the people to such an extent that they could move about freely in the villages

without the government's being able to uncover information about their activities. That is why the movement in Satara was one continuous rebellion from 1942 to 1945.

The attempt was made at Satara to bring the normal activities and administration of the British *raj* throughout Maharashtra to a standstill. Telegraph wires were cut, postal communication was interrupted and dislocated, with the result that the government authorities in the Maratha country found it impossible to have any contact with the "outer world." Dak bungalows were set on fire. Two railway stations were burned down, three goods trains were derailed. Office records from several *katcheries* were burned. This dislocation program on the lines of communication went on until nearly June, 1943.

By this time a large number of recruits had joined the resistance movement and a new cadre of workers had been formed. They stopped the dislocation activities which had been carried on spontaneously by separate individuals. Henceforth, the activities of the resistance movement were planned and co-ordinated, and action was taken only after thought and consideration by one directing group. This group necessarily worked underground.

In order to trace the Congress absconders, the police enlisted the support of criminal, antisocial elements available in the district. The situation had become serious from the police point of view, for there were more than five hundred political absconders scattered in different villages all over the district and the people had refused to surrender them. To track them down, the government was in need of information which would

help them to locate the rebels. So for every individual that was wanted, the police employed a dozen informers.

These informants were men of doubtful character, ready to betray anyone for a small sum of money. Therefore, the rebels and the people had to hand out rough and ready justice to them and the punishment given to these "collaborationists" was harsh. It had to be deterrent, if only in self-defense.

The most notorious of these police hirelings was a man called Bapurao Deshmukh. On one occasion he accompanied the police party which called on the house of a political absconder. The wife of the wanted man was standing at the door when the police arrived. Bapurao Deshmukh inquired from her about the whereabouts of her husband. She pleaded ignorance. Deshmukh stepped forward, a stick in hand, and pointing to her stomach said, "If your husband doesn't live with you, how is it that your belly is swollen?"

A week after this incident Bapurao Deshmukh was found with his hands and feet chopped off.

The article in *Blitz* then narrates how the police collected compulsory collective fines from the villagers. These fines ranged from two hundred to one thousand dollars. "They were collected with a Nazi thoroughness," *Blitz* says. And continues:

In two cases the aid of the military was called upon for collecting fines from the villages of Charan and Belashi. At Koregaon, during a fine-collection, an old woman of sixty, the mother of a rebel Congress worker who had disappeared underground, and two other women, were whipped. Beating and whipping had become quite common....

"Gunpat Patil of Kurla was shot dead by two police officials for the simple offence of telling them that he did not know the whereabouts of Pandu Master. These inci-

dents were not isolated; they were representative of what was happening all over the district in every town and village.

This police repression, however, failed to cow down the political rebels and the people. Instead of striking terror into the hearts of the common men of the village, it steeled their opposition to the British government. The popular spirit of resistance could not be broken. The repression had created only a new awareness of the issues at stake and of the task that lay ahead. The instinct of self-protection suggested the need for constructive activity simultaneous with resistance to authority, however. With this realization the *prati sarkar* came into being. From acts of civil disobedience, dislocation and destruction, the rebel group turned to the task of creating a parallel authority that would shield the villages from wanton harassment and flagrant injustice, from the corruption and merciless rule of the Satara police.

As the police devoted their sole attention to fighting the political workers, the criminals of the district were absolutely neglected. Taking advantage of the situation, donning Gandhi caps and shouting political slogans to pass off as political workers, these habitual criminals resorted to dacoity and robbery, and violence on women. In parts of Satara the law of the jungle prevailed.

Moreover, as the police had enlisted the support of this criminal element to trace political absconders, the thugs got a sort of protection from the police and began to play havoc in the villages. Their activities were carried on so openly and on such a large scale that the people were forced to conclude that they were working with some sort of understanding with the police. The task of protecting the people and of creating a new

social order in the village, therefore, fell on the underground.

What the rebels attempted to do was not a simple thing. They had the dual task of protecting the villages from the police repression on one side and from criminal elements on the other. They had to do this with a price on their heads, for the police, tired of searching for them, had given permission to their hirelings to shoot at sight any of the wanted underground men.

It was in circumstances like these, so similar to the underground in occupied Europe, that the ordinary men of the villages of India formed the village republic, the *prati sarkar*. Already, by cutting off communications, stopping the railways, and burning the post-office, they had isolated the cities and towns and made it impossible for the British government to rule in the Satara district. But that was only the negative side of the picture. It was not enough only to isolate the towns; it was equally important to establish some sort of law and authority in these villages so that in the absence of any sanction, lawlessness might not prevail. By forming themselves into groups of vigilantes, the underground successfully checked the crime wave and some of the toughest criminals of the district were brought to ready justice. While the British-controlled police, with all its resources, had failed to wipe out crime from Satara, the vigilantes group of the *prati sarkar* investigated six dacoities that took place in Shirala Peta and four others in Walwa Taluka. The property which was stolen by the dacoits was traced by the rebels and returned to its rightful owners. In the course of these investigations skirmishes frequently took place between the rebels and the dacoits. In these fights, three of the most notorious Satara dacoits paid with their lives, and one other well-

known criminal character surrendered to the police, for he was afraid he would meet with the same fate at the hands of the vigilantes. The court which tried him transported him for life but it was fear of the rebels which had brought this criminal to justice.

There was much else which the *prati sarkar* achieved: it checked the antisocial habits of the people; child marriages were abolished; the drink evil was wiped out; the manufacture of liquor was completely stopped. The people were made to learn new habits and live a new life. They were taught cleanliness and new standards of civilized life and behavior. As a political observer put it, "The experiment was a creative effort of the ingenuous talent of the common men of the village. It was mainly devised, planned and executed by the common villagers themselves. The inspiration was the urge to resist the nucleus of the mighty and organized violence of the police and find a way out for decent and self-respecting clean collective life." But for the *prati sarkar*, Satara would have been in utter chaos and the days of the Wild West in America would have been transplanted there. Even the government of India had to acknowledge that the suppression of crime in Satara was possible only because of the *prati sarkar*. But the British were a little baffled at the working of the *prati sarkar*. They could not understand why, when the Indians could resort to so much native organizational wisdom in times of crisis, they would not rally to the side of the British in a war against fascism. Nor could the British understand why, when Indians displayed such a natural aptitude for preserving law and order, policemen were constantly being bumped off by ignorant villagers.

The reason was simple. Fascism the villagers did not

understand. The way propaganda tried to interpret fascism to the villagers it looked no different from the British *raj*.

Other things happened in India over which the blanket of censorship fell.

In July, 1943, according to a Reuters message bearing a London dateline, the British Secretary of State for India, the Right Honorable Leopold S. Amery, with the whole machinery of two governments to draw upon for his information, replied in the House of Commons to a question on Bengal.

Mr. Amery referred to "a difficult food situation." In his mean little voice he explained that one of the causes of this "difficult food situation" was "the fact that Indians were eating more *per capita* as a result of increased incomes."

Two weeks later, twenty-nine dead bodies were found in a single day on the streets of Calcutta. Death was due to starvation.

The death rate mounted day by day.

Victor Alexander John Hope, Marquess of Linlithgow, Governor-General of India and ex-officio Vice-Admiral therein, was at the time ensconced in his palace in New Delhi.

In Bengal, a hungry boy was fighting with a hungry dog for a morsel of food.

In Bengal, jackals and dogs were seen attacking human bodies in which life was not quite extinct.

Thousands, hungry and destitute, had left their villages, their kith and kin, in the most desperate food hunt of our generation. They had sold their belongings. They had even sold their children.

Bengal was the province adjoining the eastern fron-

tier of India. It was the springboard of the operations in the China-Burma-India theater of war. In the event of an invasion of India, Bengal would have had to bear the brunt of the fighting.

Burma had already disappeared. The Japs had moved like lightning from Rangoon to Myitkyina. There was not an airfield in Burma on which the allies could land. The Burma Road was closed.

In Bengal, the first line of our defense, famine was taking a heavy toll of human life. Its people were emaciated, hungry, naked, withered, stripped of all ability to resist; they were devitalized too by the unsatisfied longing for human justice.

According to Leopold S. Amery, the weekly deathrate in Bengal was "about a thousand or it might be more."

According to *The Statesman*, a British-owned and British-controlled newspaper in Calcutta, "Mr. Amery's estimate was nearly eleven times less than the truth."

In an editorial, *The Statesman* said, "The continuous appearance of effort of persons somewhere within India's governmental machine, perhaps out here, perhaps in Whitehall, to play down, suppress, distort or muffle the truth about Bengal, is dragging the fair name of the British *raj* (regime) needlessly low."

In Bengal, a gaunt, hungering people, panting and exhausted, dragged themselves over hundreds of miles in search of a bowl of rice.

In the villages one heard them groan in the quiet of the night. The wailing of children filled the air. They cried for *fan*, the starched water of the rice.

In the streets of Calcutta lay human bodies with nothing more than just skin on the bare bones. They fretted with hunger till they appeared to become un-

conscious. When the smell became too objectionable they were removed and thrown away.

Victor Alexander John Hope, Marquess of Linlithgow, Governor-General of India and ex-officio Vice-Admiral therein, being satisfied thereof by information received by him of the condition of Bengal, was still in his palace in New Delhi.

In Calcutta those dying of starvation were turned away from hospitals because the beds were reserved for air-raid casualties which had not occurred.

In this second city of the empire, in the Year of Grace 1943, when a war was being fought for the restoration of man's dignity, men were digging in the dustbins for a scrap to eat.

Elsewhere in the same province of Bengal, a child was struggling to drink milk from its dead mother's breast.

Dogs shriveled up because there was nothing in the scrap heaps left by man to eat.

Down a little winding path in a small village on the banks of the Padma, a child lay cuddled on the doorstep of an empty shack, his hands holding his head and feeling faint with hunger. The bright moonlight fell on his naked body. "Ma, I am going," he said. "Throw me a morsel before I die."

I saw all this happen in the famine of Bengal in which 3,500,000 of my countrymen died. But Victor Alexander John Hope, Marquess of Linlithgow, Governor-General of India and ex-officio Vice-Admiral therein, being satisfied thereof by information received by him of the happenings in Bengal, never moved out of his palace in New Delhi.

It is now an open secret, corroborated by evidence factual and circumstantial, that the food policy of Ben-

gal was laid down by its governor in conjunction with or under the instructions of the army, without any reference whatsoever to the Indian ministers in the government of Bengal.

The governor of Bengal was the late Sir John Herbert. Herbert laid down and carried out what was termed the "denial policy." Under this policy, which was nothing more than an economic scorched earth, large numbers of boats, barges, carts, essential to the farmer of East Bengal for carrying his food grain to the market, were taken away from him and destroyed. All forms of transport were put out of operation and it was impressed upon the farmer that he should grow only that amount of rice which was necessary for his personal requirements. The farmer was discouraged from building up any reserve or from reaping a harvest, because such food grain as was in excess of his own requirements could not be transported or marketed.

The slogan in Bengal was "Grow Less Food." Consequently the soil deteriorated and the harvest generally suffered. Other causes aggravated the famine. Cyclones and floods caused havoc in parts of Bengal; the large army on the eastern frontier of India completely unbalanced the economic equilibrium of the province. There was the loss of Burma rice to be taken into account. There was the rise in population and in the cost of living.

The denial, as Herbert had visualized it, was complete. While the outside world was given the impression that Indians were hoarding rice, the truth was that there was no rice in Bengal.

For a whole year after Japan entered the war, the government of India had not thought it necessary to create a department of food, when everywhere else in

the world the creation of such a department had been one of the first steps for the defense of the country. Instead, while our nationals were the victims of harsh discrimination in South Africa, the government of India continued to ship rice to that country. In the balance of trade between South Africa and India, our exports of rice were offset by our imports of insult.

My mind goes back to the day I arrived in a small country craft at a village along the Padma River. It was a little after noon. The sun was blazing hot and I was feeling the strain of travel, having spent the night before on a wooden plank at a wayside railway station. I had made arrangements to be met at the village by an interpreter, who was a small-town Moslem lawyer handling the trivial cases of theft and minor offenses, which are tried in the district courts. He had come to meet my boat, and he conducted me to the bamboo shack reserved for the use of visitors to the village, who were few. As we walked from the riverside along the narrow lanes under the shade of the palms and the dried-up banana trees, he pointed to a group of young children. They were emaciated to the bone. Sadly they were looking at a man who was lying on the ground and breathing heavily. He was their father.

The dying man was a Moslem with a young, black, scraggy beard. He had been reduced by hunger to a skeleton. His eyes were wide open but he was not looking at anything in particular. There was a vacant gaze of unconsciousness in them. I knew he was alive only because he was breathing deeply.

"I think he is unconscious," I said to the lawyer.

The lawyer shook his head and said, "He is finished. In another hour or two he will be dead. He has been lying there for two days now."

"But can't something be done for him?" I asked.

"There are thousands like him, sir," the lawyer replied. "Thousands and thousands. No one can do anything for them."

I looked upon this grim and gruesome scene of five little children gazing silently at their dying father. There was no particular expression on their faces except that of resignation.

"If things go on like this," the lawyer said to me, "man will soon be compelled to eat man."

The same idea had crossed my mind, but I had not dared express it. The children looked so much like vultures waiting for the man to die.

I said to the lawyer, "I can think of a few men they would gladly eat."

The lawyer smiled without mirth.

"You will throw them Mr. Amery, I suppose, and Lord Linlithgow and the governor?"

"Yes," I said. "Why not?"

"We are Moslems," he said with bitterness in his voice. "Moslems do not eat such fare."

Later that evening, about six o'clock, I saw two men carry, on a bamboo bier, the dead body of the Moslem with the beard. The lawyer was with me in my shack at the time.

"This is the fourth today," he said. "There will be two more before night falls." In his little notebook which he carried in his pocket he added one more to his list of the dead.

It was difficult not to be moved by the ghastly scene around me, of man succumbing silently to an enemy he could neither see nor feel and dying by the thousands wailing for just a bowl of rice.

I got up from the bamboo chair where I had been

sitting and gazed down the long road which I could see from my shack. Along it the body was being carried to the other end of the village, perhaps to be burned, perhaps to be buried, perhaps just to be thrown away. I didn't dare ask.

There was a touch of sadness in the evening air. The sky was gray as if in mourning. Nature seemed still and quiet as a mark of respect.

"Tell me," the lawyer said. "Do you believe there is a God?"

9

On my return from Bengal I made one of my rare appearances on a public platform and spoke at a meeting of the Progressive Group in Bombay. When the meeting was over I remarked to a friend how surprised I was to see that such a large number of women had come to hear this grim tale of woe and that they had listened so eagerly to every word I had said. As I saw them sitting before me in the audience, I became conscious of Indian women as a new and separate quantity and I realized that the silent revolution had touched them also.

Fifty or seventy years ago women played very little part in the life of the country. They were neither politically nor socially conscious of their rights or obligations. In many an Indian home they were treated as nothing more than chattels.

Tagore described the women of his childhood days in an article in the *Vishwa Bharati* which would make many an Indian woman shudder today. He said:

Women used to go about in the stifling darkness of closed palanquins; they shrank from the idea of riding in carriages, and even to use an umbrella in sun or rain was considered unwomanly. If any woman unexpectedly encountered a strange man, one outside her family circle, her veil would promptly descend to the very tip of her nose, and she would turn her back to him. The palanquins in which women went out were shut as close as their apartments in the house. An additional covering, a kind of thick tent, completely enveloped the palanquin of a rich man's

daughters or daughters-in-law so that it looked like a moving tomb. By its side walked the *durwan* [flunkey]. His work was to sit in the entrance and watch the house, to tend his beard, safely to conduct the women to their relatives' houses, and on festival days to dip the lady of the house into the Ganges, closed palanquin and all!

The women who came to hear me speak on Bengal had not lived their lives in closed palanquins or been stifled in *purdah*. They were the women of the present generation and, as a new vitality came to the country with the awakening of national consciousness, the tempo of their lives also quickened and they emerged from their traditional seclusion not only to dabble in politics but to fight for the right to live freely, which orthodoxy and antiquated social customs had denied to them. Their concept of freedom had now gone beyond the political meaning of the word and included freedom to love and many others, such as freedom of thought and feeling, the existence of which they had long been unaware.

While in the more orthodox Moslem families the *purdah* has persisted, in the everyday life of India to-day it is difficult to find these remnants of social antiquity. The vast majority of Indian women have lifted the veil in more senses than one. In the streets of the big cities and towns, any number can be seen going about their day-to-day business in a normal, casual way. Out of smart limousines, driven by themselves or by a chauffeur, they are found rushing around town in the mornings, on their way to such shops as Liberty's to see a new consignment of silk, or looking in at Bagoomal's to see a new selection of *sari* borders, or stepping in at The Drawing Room to pick up a rococo frame for a Medici print, or calling at the Army & Navy Stores

for a pound of coffee or marshmallow or candy, or at Max Factor's shop or Elizabeth Arden's to change a pancake make-up from rachel to sum'r tan. But all this is superficial evidence of the change. There is a more fundamental change of outlook which is more than skin-deep and more noticeable than the change from rachel to sum'r tan.

Outside my house one morning a cab pulled up a few yards from where I was standing. There were two American officers in it, a captain and a lieutenant. The latter was engaged in a frantic discussion with the driver who did not seem to understand where the lieutenant wanted to be driven.

There was a bus stop near where the cab had pulled up at which an Indian college girl was waiting. She was trimly dressed in a clean white cotton *sari* with her hair neatly combed. She carried books under her arm. The lieutenant turned to her and said, "Excuse me, lady, do you speak English?"

The girl indicated she did.

"Could you kindly tell this driver to take me where I want to go?"

The girl interpreted for him. The driver understood.

The lieutenant was grateful. He said, "Thanks, lady. I just can't get these natives to understand a goddamn thing."

"You don't speak his language," the girl replied, coldly. "And get this straight, we are all natives here."

The bearded Sikh cabdriver, who had pricked his ears to follow the trend of the conversation, suddenly woke up and said, "Ah! Native! I native, she native, all native. Native very good." Then he laughed heartily and said to the American lieutenant, "*Umrican*, bloody

foreigner. *Ingrezi*, bloody foreigner. Bloody foreigner no good."

The way he said it there appeared to be no malice in his words, for his tone was friendly and his laughter was full, and as he drove away he seemed very pleased with himself, with the girl, with the Americans and with the world.

This little scene happened in India towards the end of 1942. I remember it as vividly as if it had happened only yesterday. I can see the girl's face still, cold and almost expressionless, olive-complexioned, with straight, sleek black hair worn in a plait and parted in the center. She was wearing a tight, high-necked *choli*, the equivalent of a blouse. It was of cotton print, made in the mills of India, and it had short tight sleeves which gripped her young shapely arms. On her white cotton *sari* was a light-green printed border. Her manner was polite but not friendly. It was proud and aloof. It reflected her sensitiveness of race and her consciousness of nationhood.

There are other types of women to be found in India. They vary in intelligence and sophistication. There are the women who have their ears and noses pierced from childhood to be able to wear chunks of gold as ornaments. There are others, fed on fat and buttered lentils, who walk with measured steps beneath the burden of their fat thighs, with little bells tinkling at their feet. The Nair women of South India still work on the rice fields wearing nothing more than a pleated white sarong, their breasts bare except, sometimes, for a diaphanous veil thrown carelessly over each shoulder. In Maharashtra in the west, village women can still be seen beside their huts polishing their brass kitchen utensils. In the Punjab, in the north, a trim-figured college girl steps

on to the tennis court in her brief shorts or *sirvals* (pajamas). In Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and New Delhi, women can be seen dancing till the late hours of the morning, their beautiful georgette *saris* worn with a Western twist.

Women are to be found in politics. They have, in fact, been very much in evidence on the political scene. In the present state of the country, the more educated women realize they have an obligation to help uplift those hundreds of thousands of women in the small towns and villages of India who have never had an even break. The more sophisticated woman who is seen in the evening in a gold lamé blouse and silk *sari*, wearing the perfume of Schiaparelli or Patou, is often the same woman who has sweated all day in a committee room trying to organize a campaign for village reform or to raise funds for a lying-in hospital in some forlorn part of India where, hitherto, women had gone into the fields at the time of childbirth and allowed nature to take its course. The significant thing about the women who are seen at the races in Bombay or at the clubs in the evening or dining and dancing in the air-conditioned ballrooms, is that they dance in the evenings with the same ease with which they do political and social work during the day.

It is but natural, because of the haste with which they have tried to bridge the gulf of years between the days of secluded living behind the *purdah* and today, when they live a free life in the open world, that their attempts at asserting their newly found emancipation should sometimes seem naïve and amateurish and their enthusiasm a trifle gawky. Part of this enthusiasm is to be seen at the conferences at which women are constantly passing resolutions.

The All-India Women's Conference is held every year. It has a president, a chairman, a chairman of the reception committee, a dozen vice-presidents, half a dozen secretaries, a handful of treasurers and a committee so large that it was often a unique experience to run into anyone attending the conference as an ordinary member. To me, our women's conferences are never without their mock-heroic touches. But so they are all over the world. Lady Astor on Temperance, Clare Booth Luce on Freedom-for-the-Asiatic, Pearl Buck on The-Rights-of-Chinese-Laundrymen, and the Daughters of the American Revolution on the Preservation of White Corpuscles, are no less amusing.

So that if we overlook the girlish enthusiasm of our women's wanting to become crusaders overnight, we have to recognize that it is at conferences like the All-India Women's that the backbone of caste prejudice and orthodoxy has been broken and it is there that the spade work of social reform has been done which has made it possible for the country to gauge and approach the problem of improving the physical, moral and mental condition of those millions of Indian women for whom one hundred and fifty years of British rule had done but little. While the picture of Indian womanhood in terms of the broad masses is depressing, it is significant that the beginnings which have been made to fight maternal and infant mortality, the high birthrate, disease and the low standard of education, have had their origins in the committees of the All-India Women's Conference and not in the secretariats of the British-run government of India.

The example of our grown-up women meeting in conference has gradually spread to the girls of our colleges. I remember one such conference of college girls

in Bombay. They were the women students of the university who had met in Jinnah Hall. In the conference room hung fantastic placards of women writhing under male dominance, with inscriptions reading, **AWAKE ARISE ACT, NO MORE YIELDING, BREAK OPEN THE BARS.** In keeping with this melodrama, the girls passed an odd assortment of resolutions. They expressed sorrow at Tagore's death, regarded Britain's war as an imperialist war, protested against the government's action in detaining students without trial, suggested that the vice-chancellor of the university be elected by the students and that the curricula and examinations be altered, demanded independence for India, congratulated students on recent demonstrations and strikes and expressed their faith in the students' inherent right to strike and picket. All this was resolved at a single one-day conference.

Our men react differently to this female exhibitionism. Some say it is a sign of the changing times, others that women should do more useful work like sewing buttons on men's pants.

All our women are, unfortunately, not educated enough to attend conferences and express themselves, however naïvely, in resolutions. For many the darkness of illiteracy has not lifted and they are still in a sort of soft slumber with regard to life.

On the land, working in the scorching sun, one finds the Gangas, Sitas and Savitris of India. They are our Mary Smiths. For them life is one long drudgery. It consists of bearing children whom they cannot feed or clothe but whom they bear with monotonous regularity because the price of a contraceptive is the best part of a week's wages—if the existence of contraceptives and the practice of birth control were at all known to any

of them. They are content to own a single garment which costs not more than fifty cents and to have one other, costing a dollar, to wear on days of festival. Their ordeals are many. Often they are withered by famine or blown away by cyclones which sweep the land. Glamour is not a part of their make-up, though they are colorful and shapely enough to keep a sculptor or a painter occupied for life. Poverty and circumstances have brought them in large numbers to industrial centers to work for higher industrial wages in preference to spasmodic employment on the land.

Women have stepped into offices and business just like women in many other parts of the world. As the war opened many doors to them, they joined in bulk the auxiliary services of the army and the navy. There were Wacs and Twas, Red Cross workers, censor girls and CIPHERETTES.

This everyday work-scene presents a dull, uninspiring picture of our womanhood. I prefer, however, to judge the women of India by individuals rather than in general, for in a nation which has been kept backward so long, the few who have broken out and achieved something are more important than the large numbers who still lag behind.

I think now of Toru Dutt, an infant prodigy who wrote verse which has been compared to that of George Sand and George Eliot.

Absurd may be the tale I tell,
Ill-suited to the marching times.
I loved the lips from which it fell,
So let it stand among my rhymes.

Born in Rambagan, 12 Manicktollah Street, Calcutta, on March 4th, 1856, Toru went with her father to

Europe at the age of twelve and was put into school at Nice in the south of France. A year later she accompanied her father to London where she took lessons in music, and at the age of fifteen she attended the higher lectures for women at the University of Cambridge. It was at Cambridge that she started writing poetry. Then she came back to India and began to learn Sanskrit. On August 30th, 1877, at the age of twenty-one, Toru died in the place where she was born. "That is the full history of her life," says Amaranatha Jha, who wrote the introductory memoir to her book of poems from which these details are culled. But in that brief spell of life, Toru Dutt wrote some beautiful verses.

Let me give you a scene of India in technicolor as she painted it in her poignant verse. It was a sonnet called "The Baugmaree Garden":

A sea of foliage girds our garden round,
 But not a sea of dull unvaried green,
 Sharp contrasts of all colors here are seen;
 The light-green graceful tamarinds abound
 Amid the mango clumps of green profound,
 And palms arise, like pillars grey, between;
 And o'er the quiet pools the seemuls lean,
 Red, red, and startling like a trumpet's sound.
 But nothing can be lovelier than the ranges
 Of bamboos to the eastward, when the moon
 Looks through their gaps, and the white lotus changes
 Into cups of silver. One might swoon
 Drunken with beauty then, or gaze and gaze
 On primeval Eden, in amaze.

Toru must have known she had not long to live. Once she wrote:

Death comes to all soon or late:
 And peace is but a wandering fire.

She had already seen Yama, the god of death. She described him thus:

Upon his head he wore a crown
That shimmered in the doubtful light;
His vestment scarlet reached low down,
His waist, a golden girdle, dight.
His skin was dark as bronze; his face
Irradiate, and yet severe;
His eyes had much of love and grace
But glowed so bright, they filled with fear.

To the god of death Toru went at the age of twenty-one, and Edmund Gosse, man of letters, wrote, "Literature has no honors which need have been beyond the grasp of a girl who at the age of twenty-one, and in language separated from her own by so deep a chasm, had produced so much of lasting worth."

I think of another Indian girl, Amrita Sher-Gil. Sher-Gil is dead, but no other Indian woman has held so high a place in the salons of Europe. This young Indian painted on a European canvas the pale sad beauty of Indian faces. Sher-Gil brought to art a new understanding, for she believed in the renaissance of Indian painting with the help of methods which belonged to the West. Her technique was Central European but the depth of feeling in her pictures was essentially Indian.

How was it, I often asked myself, that so many unself-conscious and technically immature Indian artists were able quickly to express themselves in basic forms and primary colors when they were painting the struggle and the anguish of their people? The fact is that art, inasmuch as it is a form of self-expression, is to be seen at its best when portraying, consciously or unconsciously, the underlying feelings of the people from whom it has sprung.

With the revival of Indian art and culture, there came a new vision to the women of our country. One afternoon many years ago, I remember, I had gone after school to my father's office at the Customs House to get a lift home in his car. Into his office there came a smartly dressed Indian woman who had then recently returned from Paris. Even my immature, youthful mind could not help noticing this beautiful woman who was so smart and sophisticated. As far as I remember, her purpose was to convince my father that the one hundred and twenty pairs of shoes, which she had brought with her from Paris, were all part of her personal luggage, one for each *sari*. They were, therefore, not liable to customs duty. When she left, I asked him who she was.

"She is Mrs. Sokhey," he said.

It meant nothing to me at the time. Much later in life I met her and her husband, Colonel Sir S. S. Sokhey, the brilliant bacteriologist of the Indian Army Medical Corps. But in the years that had passed she had changed. She was now known to India as Menaka, who with a troupe of dancers had won the international prize for dancing, in Berlin before the war. What a fine pair this Indian couple made—the husband, a nationalist, even though he was in army service, who had worked incessantly as head of the famous Haffkine Institute on serums and vaccines which had fought and checked many an epidemic in India; and the wife, now preferring to wear Indian *chappals* or sandals instead of her onetime Paris shoes, and interpreting to her own people and to the world abroad the beauty of form and movement of the ancient Indian dance and of the folklore, legend and myth which went with it. The change in this Indian woman was not accidental. It was a reflection of the change which had swept over the whole country.

In a different field, that of political and social work, is Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, sometime president of the All-India Women's Conference. Kamala Devi was once famous for her beauty and even now, in her fifties, she remains a fascinating person, dignified, graceful and sharply intelligent. She has represented Indian women at world conferences. She has flown the national tri-color on many a flagstaff. In 1930 she was the first woman to break the salt law. She loves music and the theater. She understands art, both Indian and European. In her spare moments she has worked for the revival of the stage. But politics has always been the breath of her life, for freedom is the first love of any subject nation. She is a well-read, well-traveled woman who has frequently visited both Europe and America. She has been an influence on Indian women who listen to her with deference.

Better known to the outside world, particularly to America, is Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, sister of Jawaharlal Nehru. Americans reacted to her in much the same way as they did to Madam Chiang Kai-shek. Mrs. Pandit's name, background, and relationship to Jawaharlal lent themselves to American publicity. She went to America and carried with her a tradition of service to her country, for she not only had been born and brought up in the national struggle but had also been the first Indian woman minister in a provincial government. I remember how Congressman Emanuel Celler, the New York lawyer, used to grow enthusiastic over her and wonder why I did not go into the same raptures as he did over Mrs. Pandit's performances on the radio network and public platforms of the United States.

"The trouble is," I said to Celler one day, "you Americans do not expect an Indian woman to be so pre-

sentable, well-spoken and intelligent, and you are amazed when you see someone like Mrs. Pandit."

Mr. Celler was surprised that I was not as enthusiastic about her as he was. That was not quite correct, for every Indian is conscious of Mrs. Pandit's record of service to her country. To this record she added a particularly brilliant chapter when she pleaded the cause of her countrymen in South Africa at the recent meeting of the United Nations at Lake Success. The truth, however, was that I had seen many an unspectacular and less glamorous Indian girl burn with love for her country and hazard her life for it, with the result that the standard of values whereby Indian women were now to be judged had become a little different.

Celler did not know that in the civil disobedience movements in India, hundreds of women—whose names have since been forgotten—left the comforts of their homes, stood shoulder to shoulder with men and were beaten as mercilessly by authorities who claimed to be preserving law and order. In 1931 there was the incident of two young girls on the Azad Maidan in Bombay. In the presence of thousands of onlookers pledged not to meet force with force, these girls were beaten by *lathis*, or thick bamboo sticks, and falling unconscious, were taken away in police vans to a jungle forty miles away, where they were left deserted. This brutal punishment they had courted deliberately by disobeying a police order with full knowledge of its consequences. They were not sisters of Jawaharlal Nehru, and Pearl Buck never stood them a meal!

There was the case of Satyavati Devi, a granddaughter of one of the best known Hindu revivalists. She was married and had two young children. One day she told a Delhi magistrate that as a Hindu woman she had been

taught that her duty was with her husband and her children. "But at times like these," she said, "a higher duty calls."

I think now of Aruna Asaf Ali, who disappeared underground in 1942. She was slightly different from the nonviolent Congress type, for she was a firebrand who talked of revolutions and upheavals in fiery speeches and whipped up feelings wherever she appeared and spoke. She was a socialist by conviction and a resistance worker who yielded no ground and gave no breather for peace. When the Congress later changed its tune and was attempting to soften the tempo of our political ardor, the voice of Aruna openly defied them. For her, nonviolence and jail-courting was just a waste of time. Slight of build, round-faced and elflike, this young woman was telling the masses to revolt. She was impatient for freedom and excited by the love of it. With a price on her capture, she toured the villages that had been ravaged by police atrocities and carried on her underground work from village to village.

Lakshmi Swaminathan, a lieutenant-colonel in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, is another of our political fighters. She is the heroine of the Malayan scene. I knew Lakshmi in Madras when we played tennis at her mother's house on Sunday afternoons. Her brother, Govind, was a contemporary of mine at Oxford. Before the war Lakshmi was a practicing doctor. At the time of the fall of Singapore she found herself in Malaya, where the Indian National Army was formed by Subhas Bose. Lakshmi was the commanding officer of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, which she led into battle. She handled rifle and bayonet and rallied around her a regiment of young girls who fought side by side with their leader. These guerrilla fighters whom she led were

girls of barely fifteen or seventeen, but this dark-haired, almond-eyed, olive-skinned young woman whom I had known and often played tennis with in the Gymkhana at Madras, had kindled a spark in them and turned them into some of the most picturesque characters of World War II. The regiment took its name from the Rani of Jhansi, an Indian princess who had fought the British in the Mutiny of 1857 and who died bleeding of wounds on the battlefield. Like her, the girls of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment fought for an ideal. Maybe it was not important what they achieved strategically; the fact remains that this was the first time that the Indian woman had ever held a rifle.

In our own home town, Bombay, an unknown Hindu girl, Usha Mehta, was operating and controlling an underground radio, planning strikes and asking the workers to revolt. She was a student in her late twenties who lectured at a college before she joined the resistance movement of 1942. Her father was a retired district judge. She did broadcasts for the Free India Radio and was arrested after some six months. She served her three-year term of imprisonment. Usha felt that the world had to know the truth about India and what was happening there. Though frail and bent with illness when my sister saw her on her release, Usha's spirit remained unbroken.

All these are Indian women and no one section or individual is representative of the whole of India. Yet all of them are Indian in one way or another. The women who figure in Kay's fashion column in the *Sporting Times* are as much India as those who clean pots and pans on the front page of *Trend*.

We have many beautiful women in India. Of those of my generation there is Begum Basalat Jah, whose

husband is the brother of the Nizam of Hyderabad. Nafiza's father is a Nawab, a Moslem nobleman. Her mother is an English gentlewoman. In her living and thinking, Nafiza is Indian. In her middle twenties, Nafiza is tall. Her face has character. With hair dark brown but eyes soft and gray, she is like a page from *Vogue*.

Aisha, the young maharani of Jaipur, is a beautiful young Hindu girl. Her husband, the maharajah, is a full colonel in the army, one of the few Indian ruling princes to see active service in this war. He is an expert polo player and in peacetime has helped to defeat many a crack English and American polo team at Hurlingham. Aisha herself has straight black hair which falls on slender, feminine shoulders. Her face is well chiselled and her skin fair, almost marble-like.

There is no dearth of beauty in Indian womanhood and though I am thinking now only of those I know, there must be many hundreds, even thousands more. The quantitative element is not as important as the exquisitely delicate femininity which is the hallmark of the Indian woman of today. Without losing their essential individuality of race and heritage, these women are beautiful in any language.

Katherine Mayo never saw women like these, even as she did not see the grace of living that can be found in my country. The only women she spoke of in *Mother India* were temple virgins. It made a good story that in the so-called temples of South India, young girls were offered by the high priest who played both pimp and brothelkeeper. It appealed to the American reading public. It was "something different."

If sordidness in sex is all that is looked for, there is

plenty to be found in India. In Bombay, a whole street in Kamatipura is lined with ugly ground-floor tenements in which little whores offer their diseased bodies for the paltry sum of twenty-five cents. These tenements are known as "cages" because from behind iron-barred doors the women bargain with the men before letting them in. It is sex at its crudest, but what else can one expect for the price of a quarter?

We have other forms of sordid sex.

In some Hindu homes, where in all solemnity the image of God is worshiped in the shape of some deity adorned with garlands of flowers and soft-smelling incense burning at its feet, an ostensibly pious Hindu father is ready to give his daughter to a strange man for a morning or an afternoon. A young, pig-tailed, oily-haired Hindu girl seen on the street, dressed demurely in a clean white cotton *sari*, so shy she will not lift her eyes off the ground, can in private life be the sole means of support of a whole family. According to the custom of the little community in which she lives, there is nothing immoral in what she does so long as it is done at a respectable hour of the day. It is the time of day which gives it respectability. These same families would be horrified at the idea of opening their doors after sunset, for according to them, promiscuity after sunset would amount to prostitution.

As everywhere else, there is a wide range of professional women in every major city of ours. They are graded in price. In Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and New Delhi, whole localities are full of them. In addition to Indians of every kind, including Hindus from Brahmins to untouchables, as well as Moslems, Parsis and Sikhs, there are women of almost every foreign nationality. The French are there. So are the English.

the Rumanians, the Czechs, the Poles, the Russians, the Chinese and, before the war, the Germans and the Japs. All this is routine, professional sex such as any traveler can find in every important city of the world if he looks for it.

But the pulse of a nation does not beat in its brothels.

In India as everywhere else men and women sleep with each other in a healthy, normal way. It is the same in Bombay as in Boston. This finer relationship between man and woman has been understood in India for a very long time. To the ancient Indians, sex was a refined form of human expression, different from the primeval urge found in animals.

About 300 or 400 A.D. an Indian by the name of Vatsyayana wrote the immortal work, the *Kama Sutra*. Kama in Hindu mythology is the god of love. He corresponds to Cupid and is represented with a bow of sugar cane, strung with bees. With the bow are five arrows tipped with flowers which overcome the five senses. A fish adorns Kama's flag and he rides a parrot or a sparrow. *Sutra* is the Sanskrit word for a small verse which can be easily remembered.

Vatsyayana wrote Sanskrit aphorisms, which can now only be interpreted by scholars. Because of its subject, his work has a notoriety which no other Sanskrit work enjoys. The language in which Vatsyayana wrote ceased to be spoken many hundreds of years ago with the result that there are numerous interpretations of the original text. These interpretations varied because Vatsyayana's aphorisms were often brief to the point of obscurity.

However, long before G. I. Joe was known to bone-crush his babe in the back of a yellow Manhattan cab, long before Hollywood portrayed "life" on the screen,

Vatsyayana wrote a whole chapter on "The Art and Technique of the Kiss."

He enumerated ten kinds of kisses.

One, *nimitaka*, the limited kiss.

Two, *sphuritaka*, the trembling kiss.

Three, *ghattitaka*, the exploratory kiss.

Four, *sama*, the straight kiss.

Five, *vakra*, the oblique kiss.

Six, *udbhranta*, the revolving kiss.

Seven, *avapidita*, the hard-pressed kiss.

Eight, *suddhavapidita*, the gently-pressed kiss.

Nine, *cushana* or *adhara-pans*, which means "drinking the lip."

Ten, *akrishta*, the super-pressed kiss.

Vatsyayana was a versatile little *pandit*.

There is much else in the *Kama Sutra*. It covers almost every phase of relationship between man and woman, marital and extramarital, from the way a man should go about selecting a bride for himself to the meaning of various kinds of tooth marks as signs of affection. Reading the *Kama Sutra* one is able to understand how much finesse in the art of love was known to the Indians of the third or fourth century. Vatsyayana has codes of behavior for every stage of heterosexual relationship from first courtship to fulfillment and even thereafter.

He writes, for instance, about a man of fashion taking unto himself a suitable wife and how his first duty is to win her confidence. According to Dr. Basu's translation, Vatsyayana recommended that for the first three days after the wedding the husband and wife should practice the strictest physical and mental continence. They should eat food without sugar, salt or seasoning and sleep on the floor. During the next seven days the

two people come a little closer to each other. They should perform their ceremonial ablutions and their toilet in each other's company. They should eat together—"all to the accompaniment of song and music." They should visit theaters as part of the honeymoon. The technique of the approach thereafter is stage by stage; first the embrace, then the kiss, then intimate talk and so on.

I once read this chapter to an American friend who became more and more restless as I went on reading, crossing his legs out of impatience because Vatsyayana was too detailed in his suggestions.

"Well, what do you think of that?" I said to the American when I had finished.

"I dunno," he said. "It's a helluva waste of time."

The *Kama Sutra* is a grown-up book, amazingly sane and modern in its outlook. But it is full blooded and should not be read by the inhibited. It would be dangerous to put it in the hands of those who have been tormented by the pages of *Forever Amber*. But to our ancient writers it was only a book on medical science.

The modern young Indian woman is certainly playing more freely with her emotions than her predecessor. When this happens without the necessary background of experience, it is often a little dangerous for the individual concerned. The young society girl, married or unmarried, is no different from the free women of other countries. She tends, if at all, to be more tactful and discreet so that the divorce courts are no indication of the promiscuity at the top of the social ladder.

I once lent Mark Hellinger's *The Ten Million* to a young married Indian woman. In it was a story of Rosa, Hellinger's cook. Rosa was German, stout and very

fortyish. Hellinger had sold a picture and when he came home he threw his arms around her.

"Tonight, Rosa," he said to her, "we will celebrate. I am taking you with me. We'll go to the Guinan Club and all the other spots you've read about. I'm happy. I want you to be happy too."

"All right," Rosa nodded. "I go."

"But just a minute," Hellinger went on kiddingly, "how about your husband? Do you think you'll miss him?"

Rosa folded her arms and tossed him a look.

"Listen, Mr. Hellinger," she said, "every night, can you eat potato salad?" *

This was one of my favorite short stories and the Indian girl who read it liked it too. She was a quiet little person, very pretty. Her married life was a strange adjustment between the man who was her husband whom she respected, and the man who was not her husband but for whom she also claimed to have a certain affection.

One day I said to her, "It's no business of mine but I don't understand your division of emotions."

"Don't you?" she asked.

We were on the terrace of my apartment on a warm summer night. The pale moonlight fell on her and I saw an impish smile creep over her face. Then she said, "Every night, can you eat potato salad?"

This practical, though conventionally immoral, attitude toward love, sex and marriage is not entirely of recent origin. Verrier Elwin told me how among certain jungle tribes there was a sort of co-ed club called the Ghotul where the unmarried were schooled for mar-

* Retold from *The Ten Million*, by Mark Hellinger (Farrar & Rinehart), copyright. 1934, by Mark Hellinger.

riage. According to the custom of the tribe it was immoral for the unmarried girl to live in the same house as her parents. She was therefore sent to the Ghotul.

This idea of a village dormitory has been a feature of primitive life all over the world. It is found among the Ifugao in the Philippines, throughout Indonesia and Melanesia in Malaya, among many African tribes and in parts of South America. In India it flourishes in Assam and has till recently been common in Chota Nagpur and South India. But nowhere is the institution more highly developed than among the Murias of Bastar State in India. The Muria dormitory is the Ghotul. Every Muria boy and girl must join it at about the age of ten and they remain in it till they marry, which is generally about the age of eighteen. The Ghotul club serves as a focus for the youth of the tribe, where boys and girls are trained and disciplined and where they learn to be useful members of the community. Slackness and quarreling is punished by the Ghotul leaders. The boys and girls are taught to fulfil duties at festivals, marriages and funerals. If anyone needs help at harvest-time he can call on the Ghotul members to work for him. Boys and girls learn above all the lesson of unity and the value of a communal life.

So much about the Ghotul's civic training. Its more remarkable feature, however, is its system of cohabitation. In some of the clubs boys and girls are "married" and live together for some years until their formal marriage—nearly always to someone else. In another type of club, however, this idea of fixed partners is not allowed, for it is believed to foster possessiveness and jealousy which defeat the ideal of communal life, and instead they are compelled to change partners frequently.

After "graduation" from the Ghotul, the parents of

the boy or girl arrange a match with a suitable partner from the neighboring village who has likewise received his or her premarital training in another dormitory. Among the aborigines of India, strange as it may seem, marriage with a virgin is regarded as unsound and likely to fail, because of the girl's or boy's inexperience in life.

Elwin told me that probably due to the so-called "sterility interval," premarital pregnancies were rare, and after marriage Muria husbands and wives settled down to a happy domestic life. The Murias had the lowest divorce rate of any tribe in India. The measure of sexual freedom which they had been allowed before marriage led to strict domestic fidelity after it.

In the Ghotul, man wooed woman by combing her hair, the American equivalent of making a pass. All this may sound extremely improper to the religious mind and may offend Boston's sense of morals but, as Verrier Elwin said, the Ghotul is not just a place of sexual promiscuity. It was a place where, although civilization did not come to these aboriginal people in the orthodox sense of the word, sex was deliberately taught, not as something dirty or something to snigger about, but as a good, clean and beautiful thing which brought richness into life. The relations between the members were strictly regulated and controlled within the general pattern of liberty.

There is another aspect of the relationship between men and women in my country which cannot be omitted from this book. Whatever the artificial barriers of caste, creed, race or convention, man and woman found each other in India in spite of a thousand folds of veil or of other synthetic restrictions—if there was a mutual desire to find each other. While political and

class differences kept individuals apart in the assemblies and the political platforms, while there were restricted clubs where only Europeans or Indians or Hindus or Moslems could enter, there was nothing to stop a woman going into the arms of the man she loved. It is one of the laws of nature that has never been successfully disproved.

An attractive English girl, well bred and well-to-do, confided in me that an Indian boy she was madly fond of was not faithful to her.

I raised my eyebrows and mockingly said, "Fancy!" for I knew she wanted to be as possessive of him as she was of the empire which she felt belonged to her.

"Isn't it a little ironical?" I asked

"Not at all," she answered. "My love for him has nothing to do with my views on India. I don't look upon him as an Indian just as I never think of you as one. Do you think of me as English or foreign?"

"No," I said, "but for a different reason. I look upon all women as women. I am conscious of beauty or ugliness in women as I am of beauty or ugliness in any other form. I am conscious of other qualities in womanhood—gentleness, ingratitude. But you don't look upon a man in that way. You are instinctively conscious of his race and color. It's only when you want the man that you are ready to overlook the difference. That's a very different thing."

"Nonsense," she said. "If I were conscious of any difference I wouldn't want him, would I?"

"You would. You do. That's where it hurts. The superiority you believe you have doesn't work out the way you want it. Your mind has created a barrier but for once you find you are on its wrong side. It can work both ways, you know."

"There is no barrier in my heart for him."

"No, but think of the years there was one for other men like him. What is it you want from him?"

"I want him to love me."

"Doesn't he?"

"With his body, yes. Not with his heart."

"Do you want his child?"

She looked at me almost with anger in her eyes. She bit her lip and said, "Yes, of course, you fool."

I confess I was a little surprised.

"Have you told him that?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I'm so afraid he wouldn't want it."

"In a woman's love there should be no room for pride."

I don't know what happened between them after that but a few months later he died in an air crash. He was a soldier in this war, one of those who must have known he was going to die and was always smiling about it.

When I saw her many months later she was not the same woman. I could see it from the look in her eyes.

She was in a party one day in a stodgy beer- and whisky-drinking crowd. She came over to speak to me.

"I want to tell you something," she said.

"What is it?"

"I told him before he died."

There was a look of triumph on her face. She looked more attractive than ever. She had found the depth of her love even though physically it was now dead.

Mixed affairs and mixed marriages are now more frequent than before, because in spite of caste, convention and prejudice, an emotion needs freedom to re-

alize itself even as a man or a nation must be free to rise to full stature.

Many around me have married in and out of the community and in and out of the race. Nobody worries about such things any more.

I think of the children of some of these mixed marriages. Sir Ness Wadia married an Englishwoman and became a Christian himself. His son, Neville, married the daughter of Jinnah, a Moslem. Their children are, therefore, Christian by religion, though by descent they are two quarters Parsi, one quarter Moslem, one quarter English.

"What are your children?" I once asked Dina, the young mother.

"Indian, of course," she retorted. "What did you think?"

She was right, for that was the most important thing about them.

Several of my near relatives have married outside the religion. The most striking example is that of my cousin's marriage to a Hindu boy who was in college with her. At the time of their marriage neither family was very happy about the situation. The girl's father was my uncle, one of the outstanding surgeons of India. He served in the First World War, in which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. During the Mesopotamian campaign, fighting for the British, he was mentioned nine times in dispatches.

The boy's father was a high government official in the Indian Civil Service. In terms of the Indian Social Register, the two young people could not have been better bred. But their marriage had for some time disturbed the elders, for prejudices against intermarriage even among the more educated Indians of the different

religious communities had not yet been wiped out. But something had brought these two young people together. It was the movement. The boy disappeared underground. The girl was arrested for her political work and later released after trial.

All this was typical of what was happening in India, for in the political upheaval that swept over the country, class, caste and strict community and religious affiliations were uprooted, and the families of the young people began to realize that these affiliations were no longer so important. While in the days of my grandmother it was the older generation that influenced the new, in the India of my time it is the younger men and women who are responsible for changing the political beliefs of their parents.

10

As time wrought changes in the mosaic of Indian life, new and increasing problems faced the Indian people. Politics formed the main background for these problems and in the unstable condition of the country values changed and varied the fortunes of our political men. One had to take fresh stock of oneself and of one's country and of those who were guiding its destiny.

There was a time when Gandhi alone dominated the Indian scene. More than any other single individual he was the symbol of the feelings and aspirations of 400,000,000 people. He had acquired the status of a leader on world standards. He had influenced the mind and the heart of a whole continent. Gandhi was India. He alone was India. His influence had grown beyond all expectations. His power to mould the destiny of his people was unquestioned. It was an accepted fact that no agreement could be arrived at between Britain and India without its being ratified by Mahatma Gandhi. His little grass hut at Sevagram in Wardha symbolized the indomitable spirit of resistance of a people struggling to be free. It had become a national shrine.

From each campaign of civil disobedience Gandhi had come out wielding more influence and more power than before. The years of struggle had given him poise and dignity. He spoke with an authority which no one challenged. He made many mistakes, some of which he admitted, but he always managed to extricate himself from every difficult situation in which he found him-

self, with so much grace and so much subtlety that the moral victory, more often than not, was on his side.

The reason for Gandhi's growing influence was that he had produced results. As a result of constant political agitation, we were able to have, for the first time in the history of India, governments drawn from the elected representatives of the people. It was impressive to see representative Indians in office. This would never have been possible except for the sustained resistance which Gandhi had offered. He had given the national demand a cohesive force.

Gandhi stood for three main things: freedom, non-violence, and the untouchables. On these issues he never wavered. His consistency had its disadvantages. It did not make allowances for the element of human nature or for the weaknesses and vagaries of the average man. It was unhealthy in a nation aspiring to democracy that a single man should continually dictate policy. The result was that many of his followers got pushed into leadership without having a mind or any opinion of their own. His followers, moreover, became intolerant of criticism against him or against themselves.

But as I looked at the Indian political scene in the year 1943 it presented a less one-sided picture. Another Indian had come on that same scene and occasionally he stole the headlines.

His name was Mohamed Ali Jinnah.

I first heard of him when someone in our house was telling how, as a handsome young England-returned Moslem, Jinnah had married a Parsi baronet's daughter and how our local Social-Register set was in a furore over the marriage. Jinnah had put our society, with a capital "S," into complete disorder. That sort of thing wasn't done in India, nor was it encouraged. Orthodoxy

disapproved strongly of the whole incident, but to me, as a youngster, the story of a rich man's daughter marrying a handsome Mogul in spite of family opposition was exciting to hear.

Jinnah began his political career as a member of the Congress. When the time came for him to be accepted as a front rank Congress leader, he was cold-shouldered by the strong Hindu element within the Congress. Sorrow came to him in his personal life about the same time as disappointment in his political career. He withdrew into a shell and when he emerged years later he turned his attention to the exclusive leadership of the Moslems of India, who numbered 90,000,000—approximately a quarter of the total population. He joined the Moslem League and gave his coreligionists a new platform and a new policy. He made the Moslem cause appear so important that it threatened to encroach on the exclusive monopoly of the Congress to speak for the whole of India. Jinnah now claimed to speak for almost a quarter.

To understand the Hindu-Moslem problem it is necessary to have at least a nodding acquaintance with the pattern of our people. In terms of figures the important fact is the gross numerical disproportion of Hindus to Moslems—about three to one. It is estimated that the Hindus total 270,000,000 and the Moslems about 90,000,000. The balance is made up of other communities like the Sikhs, the Parsis, the Anglo-Indians, the Indian Christians and several others who do not, however, affect the political future of India, which depends mainly upon the agreement of the Hindu with the Moslem.

While it is difficult to divide the country horizontally, it is reasonable to say that the Moslems are plentiful

in the North and East, while the Hindus are to be found in a greater proportion in the center and the South. By reason of the climate in which he lives, the Moslem is taller, stronger and more virile. The Hindu, dwelling in the warmer climate, is small-boned and often seems emaciated in appearance. The physical difference resulting from geographical influences is accentuated by differences of diet. The vast majority of Hindus in the peninsular South cannot afford to eat meat. The Moslems in the richer North do eat it.

There are, furthermore, fundamental differences of religion and temperament between the two. Islam, the Moslem religion, is democratic in its form of worship. There is nothing like a private god in a Moslem home. Moslem worship is congregational. It makes no distinction. Every Moslem, be he prince or beggar, kneels where he stands as the muezzin calls for prayer. The Nizam of Hyderabad, the most powerful Moslem ruler in India, takes his place among the meanest of his subjects, and were he to appear late at a prayer meeting, he would never push his way among the kneeling brothers-in-faith. Before Allah all are equal. This gives the Moslem a feeling of brotherhood and a sense of cohesion. The Moslems also eat off a common plate on days of festival.

The Hindu form of worship is the exact opposite of the Moslem. Each Hindu has a private niche in his home and members of the same family worship there separately. Likewise, the Hindu pantheon is full of unnumbered gods and each Hindu worships God in a different form. This, even more than caste, cuts at the very root of social unity.

The temperamental differences between the Hindus and the Moslems can be attributed to the difference in

their historic background. For five centuries, from the thirteenth to the eighteenth approximately, the Moslems ruled over India, except for such brief revivals of Hindu rule as that of Shivaji—the Maratha chieftain who carved out a small kingdom for himself in the west of India towards the latter part of the seventeenth century. The memory of their long Moslem domination is fresh and strong in the Moslem's mind. He still looks upon himself as a member of the *fateh koum*, the victorious community.

The Hindu has no recollection of a day when he ruled over his country, or over himself for that matter. He has been a subject so long that he has lost the confidence of a free man.

There are other differences, which are not so important. The Moslem is indolent. He has always been the Grand Mogul, a lotus-eater. The Hindu is a fatalist and generally more industrious. He is an ascetic, a delver into philosophy, a student of abstract forms. The Moslem's indolence is partly to be explained by the habits formed in him as a member of the ruling class, partly because, coming from the colder regions of Asia, he had degenerated in the humid climate of India. The Hindu, native to the soil, is accustomed to work in the heat.

While these various differences have existed between the Hindus and the Moslems, a desire for unity against a foreign aggressor came to these two communities as far back as in the days of the Mutiny of 1857, which is now called the First War of Indian Independence. Since then there has been a continuous effort on the part of the Hindus and the Moslems on the one hand to come together and of the British on the other to keep them apart.

In the days when the country had stood like a rock behind Mahatma Gandhi, when the Khilafat and the Congress had joined hands in a common cause, India's solidarity was at its peak and nationalism was on fire. One got a glimpse of Indian nationhood if not of Indian independence.

The outlook in 1943 was very different. Jinnah had enunciated the idea of carving out a portion of the country and turning it into one or two autonomous Moslem states to be called Pakistan.

This idea was not new. It had been suggested before, among others by the Moslem poet, Sir Mahomed Iqbal. In a speech to his coreligionists, Iqbal had said that the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Moslem state appeared to him to be the final destiny of the Moslems—at least those of North-West India. Iqbal was, however, somewhat vague in his conception of this Moslem state. No one can now say what was really in his mind. Loosely there was a desire to revive ancient Moslem culture, but Iqbal had no concrete plan for Pakistan.

Nothing serious, however, happened to the idea until its adoption by Jinnah as the issue on which he was to bait the Congress. Polished in speech and manner, suave, well educated, Jinnah proclaimed himself as the deliverer of his brethren from the domination of the Hindus. He took the vague idea of Iqbal and tried to give it concrete shape. He defined Pakistan to mean the creation of one or more autonomous states comprising six provinces where, Jinnah claimed, the Moslems were in a majority. The provinces in question were Sind, Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier, Bengal and Assam.

The Hindu-Moslem problem then became a major political issue.

It has always been the stock argument of every Britisher that Britain could not grant self-government to India because of the differences that exist between the two major communities. Ever since the round-table conferences, it has become the hackneyed argument of every Blimp, every Amery, every little Churchill. We in India had always discounted this, believing as we did that the problem was a bogey of the British government. We believed and, until recently, had reason to believe, that the problem only touched the fringe of our living and that it was not fundamental to our existence.

But the idea of Pakistan was no longer a poet's dream. Nursed by grievances which regrettably were made available by defective Congress leadership, fed by religious fanaticism which is inherent in the Moslems, the idea of Pakistan ate its way into the Moslem political mind. It gave to Jinnah the opportunity to ventilate the bitterness of his personal and political life and to view his new role as deliverer of the Moslems as a mission, a faith, almost a religion.

For all this the Congress was much to blame. With the great work it had done, the Congress had become smug and complacent about its growing power. During its tenure of office in the provinces it had shown a tendency to be high-handed and dogmatic in administration. It had become intolerant of criticism. When Jinnah first appeared on the scene and made his claim to speak for Moslem India, the Congress treated him with little more than scorn. Like Nelson, the Congress turned its blind eye on the Moslem demand for Pakistan. Success had led the Congress to believe that it

had the exclusive right to represent every sect and community in the country. Time and again Jinnah challenged this, but the attitude of the Congress did not alter. In spite of what it said in its resolutions and what its leaders proclaimed in their utterances and statements, there had crept into the Congress a marked Hindu bias.

The tone of the Congress had, moreover, deteriorated. Every *khaddar*-clad, twenty-five-cent member believed that by reason of his donning *khaddar* he had qualified for the leadership of the people of India and that this leadership was a Congress monopoly. The sham and hypocrisy which masqueraded in the name of the Congress was another factor which caused this deterioration. No one from within the High Command questioned whether the men who were discharging the responsibilities of the Congress in various spheres were fit and qualified to fulfil those obligations.

As an experiment the Congress, in its first blush of power, thrust prohibition on the province of Bombay. With full knowledge that it would be resented by large sections of the population, the Congress made it the first item of its program, leaving untackled other more important issues on which it had almost universal support. In those days permits to drink were issued to only three groups of people: Europeans, habitual drinkers under a medical certificate, and Parsis for religious ceremonies. Out of respect for the wishes of our first popular government, many young men accustomed to sit and drink in the evening did not avail themselves of these loopholes in order to obtain a permit. We felt that the restrictions, however irksome, were for the good of the community and we believed it our duty to sup-

port the Congress in its first major item of reform, even though it was obvious that prohibition would not work in the long run.

One felt an obligation as a citizen. There were millions who drank cheap country liquor to excess and ruined their lives. There were mill hands whom I had seen drunk outside toddy and liquor shops. Their health was bad and the liquor rotten. They had wives and children who cried in desperation because the breadwinner squandered his pay in a single night. In terms of their welfare a little sacrifice on our part seemed well worth the effort.

It was at that time that I went to the house of a Congress leader who had supported prohibition on every political and public platform. We talked of Congress policy and of the bigger issues of the Indian problem. When I came back home that evening I became a little disillusioned with the leadership of the Congress and I regarded myself as a bit of a "sucker," because during the whole evening we had sipped the best bonded Scotch.

Many of the Congress ministers and their parliamentary undersecretaries who held office in the various Congress provincial ministries were really untrained for the jobs with which they were entrusted. They had come from all walks of life, somewhat like the personnel of the first Labor government in Britain. Often they had no background for the job. They saw themselves lifted from hereditary poverty, which they attributed to the British in India, to positions which they could use to their own advantage. The Congress pledge had imposed on them a limitation of salary of about one hundred seventy-five dollars a month. The unfortunate thing was that in some cases the acceptance of office under a

Congress government became more a license than a salary.

Perhaps the most shocking spectacle of all was the exploitation of Congress ideals for purposes different from what the Congress had intended. While the view was held that this war was not ours—a view which is as understandable as that of a conscientious objector—some Congress-supporting people, pious to the *n*th degree, often *khaddar*-clad and Gandhi-capped, appeared to have no political scruples about availing themselves of opportunities for gain which the war provided. A number of Congressmen, who basked in the shadow of the Mahatma, were running some of the largest war orders in the country. Yet these were the same people who told the small man, "This is not our war. Stay out of it."

What became of the principle?

The House of Birla, which staunchly supported Gandhi, was executing government orders to the tune of crores of rupees. Their mills were making khaki cloth. Yet the Mahatma gave and continued to give the House of Birla his benediction by staying in it during his visits to Bombay. The man in the street asked himself, "Isn't there some discrepancy about this whole affair?"

All these things were of minor importance on the larger canvas of the Indian problem, but they involved matters of principle and influenced, by example, hundreds and thousands of men. What was shown up by these incidents was the weakness which came from lack of discipline, lack of training and lack of character in those who were shot up to the front rank because they were the only men available. Many able men were finding it impossible to accept the strait jacket of the

Congress pledge and too honest to take the pledge and break it.

When autonomy first came to the province of Bombay, the Congress did not have the vision to set up coalition governments or, in simple language, to share the spoils with the Moslem League. Thus orthodox Moslems were out of the administration. Instead, to appease those who criticized the Congress for its refusal to adopt coalitions, the Congress adopted what might be called the "stooge system." It took into its ministries, Moslems willing to sign the Congress pledge in return for a seat in the cabinet. With the exception of one man, these Moslems were not Congressmen in the real sense of the word. They were at best "collaborationists." Jinnah called them Quislings.

All this built up Jinnah. From a silken-suited, successful lawyer who had earlier made his reputation through a handful of sensational criminal cases, Jinnah became the embodiment not only of all that was Moslem in thought and culture, but also of all that was anti-Congress.

The appearance of Jinnah on the Indian scene in the role of a Moslem deliverer is to be traced not alone to Moslem aspirations. There has always been a desire on the part of the British to build up Jinnah in order to counteract the growing influence of the Congress. Imperialist interests in Britain quite rightly feared that the more solid the Indian national demand became, the more difficult it would be to resist it. Behind all the usual glib talk of Britain's being the guardian of the Indian people and having a trust to discharge, there was the vitally important factor of India's being a market for British goods. India, moreover, offered employment for many thousands of Brit-

ishers in the administration of the country as well as in business, trade and commerce.

It was not only the British who made Jinnah's leadership possible. The Congress helped to a considerable extent. Its early reaction was to minimize his political importance. The Congress failed to realize that while the Moslems were just as anxious to shake off the foreign yoke, they were likely to resent being pushed aside when freedom came and being made to play a minor role in the affairs of the country.

Towards Jinnah, the Congress attitude was not even condescending. It regarded him as a crank and Pakistan as an obsession. Jinnah had the patience to bide his time. He relied on the political pattern of the country to prove that the Indian fight for independence against the British could not be carried on without active Moslem co-operation. The Congress had neglected to spread any propaganda among the Moslem masses and the Moslem intelligentsia. Congress did not bother to counteract the effect of Jinnah's growing popularity.

The weakness of this attitude of the Congress was obscured in the general enthusiasm to see India free. But it told in the long run, and when Gandhi was released for medical reasons from the Aga Khan's palace in Poona, he learned from his political advisers that Jinnah had gained in political power beyond all expectation. Gandhi was quick to see the need for undoing the damage that had been done. He realized that the August resolution had swept the Congress off the scene at the most crucial hour. He tried to gather the diffused energies of the nation and see if they could not yet be harnessed to the war effort of the

democracies. He wrote to the Viceroy and asked for an interview.

But the British were not going to help him rebuild the prestige of the Congress. Why should they? In their hard days they had bargained for Congress co-operation. It was not forthcoming. Today they were well on their way to victory. Their dark days were over. After the war with thousands unemployed they would need India as a market for goods and services; at such a crucial stage it would be ruinous to Britain's postwar economy to disregard India in its calculations. So Lord Wavell closed the door. His terms were such that no one could accept them with self-respect. "Withdraw the August resolution," Wavell said in effect. "Come to me as a penitent."

The Mahatma turned to Jinnah. If he could solve this bogey which was called the Hindu-Moslem problem, Gandhi thought, his claim would be undisputed. He would have proved his case, the Congress's case, India's case.

Gandhi therefore wrote to Jinnah. In one of the letters in the chain of correspondence, Jinnah emphasized that he saw Gandhi merely because of the latter's "fervent request" made in the first letter, which ended with the words, "Do not disappoint me." It was Gandhi's need, Jinnah emphasized. He also knew that to refuse to see the Mahatma after the latter had accepted the principle of Pakistan as a basis for negotiation, would be bad policy. "I shall be glad to receive you in my house," was Jinnah's characteristic reply.

Throughout the incidents that led up to the parleys and during the talks themselves, the Mahatma was made to swallow the lump of humility. In Jinnah's

letter dated September 17th, the Moslem made his first thrust at the Mahatma's Achilles' heel.

Jinnah said:

I understand that you have made clear to me that you represent nobody but yourself and I am trying to persuade you . . . that this [division of India] is the road which will lead us all to the achievement of freedom and independence not only of the two major nations, Hindus and Moslems, but of the rest of the peoples of India, but when you proceed to say that you aspire to represent all the inhabitants of India, I regret I cannot accept that statement of yours. It is quite clear that you represent nobody else but the Hindus, and as long as you do not realize your true position and the realities, it is very difficult for me to persuade you, and hope to convert you to the realities and the actual living conditions prevailing in India today.

Let me sum up briefly what transpired at this ill-omened meeting. Gandhi said he came as an individual representing nobody but himself and willing to be converted, and willing if converted to exert his influence on the Congress and the country. Gandhi thought Jinnah would know and would not dispute that in effect he was the Congress and in effect he was also India. Jinnah was no fool. He registered his preliminary objection when he questioned the propriety of parleying with a man who had, according to his own admission, no representative capacity. Jinnah was not prepared to commit himself as the leader of the Moslem League, so long as Gandhi disclaimed responsibility to speak on behalf of the Congress.

What then was Jinnah's motive in meeting Gandhi at all? The answer appears to be that even though nothing would result from the meeting in the shape of an agreement, because of the ocean that existed between their rival and mutually exclusive ideologies,

Jinnah felt that Pakistan would gain world-wide publicity such as it had not had before. It was not elucidation of Pakistan that Jinnah sought to give the world. Elucidation he appeared constantly to have shirked. But general publicity for the Moslem cause would build up the Moslem League, and Gandhi had made it possible for Jinnah to appear before a world audience, an opportunity Jinnah had not had before. Vaguely one had understood that the Moslems had a right to some sort of protection as a major minority and a right to safeguards lest in an independent India with an overwhelming Hindu majority they should be swept away.

But Pakistan as it emerged from the Gandhi-Jinnah meeting was a totally different thing. From the Moslem League's point of view there was no question of *solving* the problem of Hindu-Moslem relationships under conditions of segregation in terms of India as a whole. The gist of the League's Lahore resolution was not settlement but further separation. It was in terms of the Congress as uncompromising as the August resolution of the Congress was in terms of Britain. Congress had said to Britain, "Quit India." The Moslem League said to the Congress, "Quit the territories where Moslems dominate." It was not Jinnah's demand that these territories be canvassed as to their desire to secede. Jinnah's demand was that where numerically Moslems were in a majority, the said territories should *ipso facto* be separated.

Jinnah's dogmatism on this point was in marked contrast with the attitude of Gandhi even on so admitted a right as that of India to its independence. In May, 1942, Gandhi was asked by a representative of the American press if he would be willing to submit

the Indo-British question to arbitration. The Mahatma replied in the affirmative. At this stage a representative of an Indian nationalist paper asked him how such a fundamental right could be subject to arbitration. Gandhi said that independence could be a common cause, yet for him, to refuse arbitration would be to arrogate to himself complete justice.

So that the first point that emerged from the Gandhi-Jinnah meeting was that the partition of India was to be accepted forthwith as a fact, as the first condition of any further negotiation between the Congress and the League. The second point that emerged from the meeting was that Jinnah was not much concerned with the independence of India or with its self-determination. He was not concerned with India in the present sense of that word. Once Pakistan was separated from Hindustan, each state would negotiate and fight for such terms as it wanted from the British government. "I am only concerned with the fate of my *nation*," Jinnah said. Not his community, mark you, but his nation! Gandhi was free to do what he liked with his nation—the Hindus!

All this came as a shattering blow to Gandhi, even though before the meeting two things had become apparent to him. One was that Jinnah was wielding an unholy and dangerous influence over Moslem India, and that this influence was growing day by day. The other was that if this state of affairs were allowed to continue, it would shatter the national work of nearly three decades and the Congress would lose its *raison d'être*; indeed the Congress would not be able to speak for the Moslems because Jinnah would speak for them, and it might not even be able to speak for the Hindus,

for the Hindu Mahasabha, an exclusively Hindu political organization, would claim that right.

Aware as the Mahatma was of all this, he made the blunder of seeing Jinnah on the latter's terms. It amounted to accepting Jinnah's claim that he alone represented the Moslems, a claim which the Congress had hitherto always denied. The greatest Congressman of all had now actually gone to Jinnah's house and accepted the principle that Jinnah was Moslem India. Whatever precautions the Mahatma took to stress that he went as an individual and not as a representative of the Congress, he was ill advised from the point of view of practical politics to ask Jinnah for an interview and to humble himself to the extent he did. It gave Jinnah the opportunity to score, and it must be said in fairness to Jinnah's ability that he made full use of the opportunity. Jinnah never once missed telling the Mahatma that the Congress could be only a Hindu body talking in terms of Hindu freedom; that the Moslems were a nation entire in themselves; that the sooner the Mahatma and the Congress disillusioned themselves about their hold over India as a whole, the better it would be for all concerned. That was Jinnah's theme. He never once strayed from it; he never hit off the mark.

The most peculiar feature of the talks, as judged from the published correspondence, was that it was Gandhi who was always interpreting not only what the Congress and he himself had said, but also what he understood the Moslem League to have said. Jinnah merely contented himself by pointing out where Gandhi was wrong. Whenever elucidation was requested from Jinnah it was not forthcoming, so that what Pakistan implied in terms of boundaries, what

its constitution would be in terms of the minorities of Pakistan and a hundred other matters of vital importance appeared to be brushed aside. Jinnah had enunciated the broad outlines—the gaps would be filled in at his convenience. A nationalist paper commented, “To every question, Mr. Jinnah referred to his Lahore resolution, as if it were like the laws of the Medes and the Persians and contained the seeds of some eternal truth.”

Throughout the talks Jinnah's tone was one of extreme dogmatism. It bore the stamp of a small-town dictator. The result was not tragedy, but melodrama. Yet in India as it is today, it made its appeal, because the broad mass of Moslems was too uneducated to realize the limitations of Jinnah's leadership, his utter bankruptcy of wisdom. To the political observers of our time, Jinnah was too small for the role he wanted to play. Ability was not enough for the leadership of 90,000,000 Moslems. With ability must come vision, and leadership must come by instinct. And Jinnah had never gone far beyond his original status—that of an advocate with a brief.

Bankruptcy of leadership is not only a failing of the Moslems. The leadership of the Congress too has often verged on bankruptcy. Concentrating as the Congress did on one theme—freedom of India—it has neglected building, side by side, the foundations wherein freedom can be established and enjoyed. It is not enough to talk of a revolution, silent or otherwise, and hope that some phenomena will occur to bring about the transition and the eventual transfer of power as a matter of course. Strangely enough, it was an inscription carved on the main entrance of the north block of the Civil Secretariat which offered the best advice to India.

The inscription, chiselled in stone, read: "Liberty will not descend to a people; a people must raise themselves to liberty." The words were those of Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, and they fell on deaf Indian ears.

So in 1943 when I looked upon the Indian scene and contemplated the political horizon ahead, there was little that was encouraging. We stood at the crossroads. Like travelers, we had come to this point of the journey on a dark and dreary night. The stars were blacked out and the signposts that might have shown us the way had been blown down. There was nothing to indicate the road we should take. Nor was it possible for us to turn back, for we did not now remember any more the road by which we had come.

I sat in the office of the *Bombay Chronicle* that lonely night on which the Gandhi-Jinnah correspondence was released to the press and asked myself the questions of the hour.

What sort of freedom will it be if we cannot enjoy it in peace with our fellow countrymen?

What sort of a country will India be to live in, if we cannot make the overnight railway journey from Delhi to Lahore without a passport and a visa from Hindustan into Pakistan?

Of what sort of nationhood will we be able to boast if this vast land of ours is broken up into fragments and pockmarked with boundaries like the petty states of prewar Central Europe?

I had to pause and think. For every thinking Indian it was the hour for reflection.

Hitherto, it was a simple thing to make decisions, for the issues were clear. There was no conflict on the question of freedom. In as much as Gandhi and the Congress had stood and fought for freedom, there were

no two opinions on what side we should be. But the issue was no longer a straight fight between India as represented by the Congress and Britain as represented by its vested interests.

We were on the verge of freedom but we had lost all sense of unity.

11

The breakdown of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks came as a rude shock to many an Indian whose wishful thinking had made him lose all sense of political perspective. The emotional hold which Gandhi had on the majority of Indian people was largely responsible for this lack of realism. Like a magician, he was expected to produce an egg from under the hat and he was expected never to fail. For most people, the picture of Gandhi with his arm affectionately round Jinnah, taken on the first day of their meeting, was sufficient evidence to guarantee that the talks would succeed, that Hindus and Moslems would sink their differences and that the British government would be confronted with a united demand.

On the eve of the meeting I went to my editor and asked him if I could write and say that it would be ill advised to place too much hope on the talks. In the months which preceded the meeting, the gulf between the Congress and the Moslem League had quite obviously widened. It stood to reason that Jinnah would not surrender his newly acquired hold over the Moslems merely because Gandhi was inclined to pat him on the back. But my editor did not see things in that light. As editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, always so close to Congress circles, he felt he knew better. I bowed to his wishes because he was my boss, but I differed from his judgment.

He was not, however, the only editor who felt that

way. The whole Indian press was in a state of emotional hysteria over the meeting. I felt a little odd being the only person in our office who did not share this optimism. So I did not comment on the talks, nor did I join the pilgrimage which went daily to Jinnah's house on Mount Pleasant Road in Bombay, where the meeting was being held.

One day the news leaked out that the talks had failed. A journalist got hold of the whole correspondence between Gandhi and Jinnah and a Bombay newspaper promptly printed it.

I went to my editor again. I asked him if the ban on me was lifted. In his fed-up mood he indicated that I could write as I liked.

The truth had to be told by someone. While there was nothing wrong with the Congress as a political organization and while at heart it was sound, its personnel had become intolerant of all other political opinions, organizations and parties. It almost believed that the right to fight for freedom was its prerogative alone.

Nonviolent *satyagraha* movements had undoubtedly made the people more alert. Through them India had acquired a national consciousness. But the Congress mistake was to presume that with this awareness there would also come, as a matter of course, a readiness and ability to take over power. The trend of Congress teachings was that freedom must come first and it didn't matter a damn what followed.

There were other weaknesses and difficulties to be discerned in the policy and leadership of the Congress. Nonviolence, great as it had been when enunciated by the Mahatma, had evolved into a sort of vegetarianism in politics. It had been difficult to sustain the zest for

a nonviolent struggle. On the one hand there had been frequent outbreaks of violence and on the other, when the theory of nonviolence was strictly adhered to, the struggle appeared almost childish. There was too much symbolism and too little real action. At times the struggle appeared to be more like a cricket match on the village green than a full-blooded political struggle to oust the British. *Satyagrahis* sent personal letters to the district commissioner or the magistrate, telling him beforehand of the time and place of the intended *satyagraha*. The letter might almost have ended with the words, "Kindly send a car to meet me on my arrest."

Likewise, it was a little sickening to read in the editorials of the nationalist press that a certain *satyagrahi* did not get the class of prison treatment to which he was entitled. Political persons had three kinds of status: A, B and C. The more prominent national leaders were put into Class A. The lesser known were put into Class B and the rank and file went to Class C. It was a little absurd to find the editorials of the nationalist press requesting the government to transfer a passive resister from a lower to a higher class. Yet this was done on more than one occasion.

Moreover, the plain fact had to be admitted that those who held the lesser offices in the party's numerous organizations were not sufficiently educated to take an informed or useful part in conducting the affairs of the country. Most of them knew something about Gandhism and nonviolence. They knew, often from personal experience, that maladministration was rampant in the country. They knew the many flaws in local government and in the social services. They were vaguely familiar with the living conditions of the working classes, but most of them were completely at sea

about the greater issues that lay before the world. On various occasions the party had thrown away chances because of its unwillingness to bring fresh blood into its leadership, and thus a demoralization had set in. The Congress showed a reluctance to rejuvenate itself or to cut adrift from those forces which hung round its neck like dead weights. A party which does that sort of thing with its eyes wide open is sooner or later bound to be challenged by more progressive forces in the country, even though these new forces may not be organized on any proper political basis.

While the work of the Congress must not be underestimated, it was a sign of weakness that our people were prepared blindly to accept its leadership if only because through this leadership we had come so far on the road to freedom. Very few realized we had entered a new phase in the struggle and that we were fighting for two freedoms: one from the British, the other from the prejudices of our countrymen.

All this told on Congress prestige, and the direct result was that, as opposed to supremacy in the sphere of Indian politics, the Congress had now to contend with rival organizations, rival leaders and rival ideologies. Our goal became more distant because the Hindu-Moslem question was transformed from a bogey into a very real problem which stood directly in the way of our freedom. From our point of view, no matter who scored in the battle of wits and in the exchange of correspondence between Gandhi and Jinnah, it was the country that suffered and the country that lost.

Our limitations were not entirely our own fault. The best available talent in the country had often rotted in prison cells because jail-courting was an essential feature of the struggle. A people whose leaders were

continually being arrested and put into prison must, in twenty years, feel the effects of that strain. Normal life in India was continually being disrupted. Our young men and women in schools and colleges had neglected their studies in order to participate in political fermentations, believing, as they had been allowed to believe, that to take part in processions and political meetings was a form of *desh seva*, which meant service to the country. In the excitement of living in those hectic days of struggle, they forgot to lay for themselves the solid foundations that might come from studentship.

The Congress had placidly acquiesced in this attitude of the younger generation and had not, until after the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, taken any initiative in moulding student opinion on a constructive basis. The result was a whole generation that grew up with the struggle found itself lacking the essential background without which no people can shoulder the responsibility of freedom. This constructive side of Congress activity had been shockingly neglected. It was not absent from Congress policy. It was merely wanting in practice.

There were many other reasons which made me disappointed in the state of my country. Because of our own internal political wrangling and a hopelessly inadequate British-controlled administration, Indian public opinion had been allowed to become apathetic to the war and to the dangers of a Japanese invasion. There were numerous occasions on which it would have been advisable to give the people a correct picture of the delicate situation that faced us. It was never done, and even when the Japs had crossed the Somra Tracks and had, therefore, virtually traversed the frontier of India, the commander-in-chief was inclined to gloss it

over in his broadcast to the people. India was given an armchair ride in the war of nerves and then expected to make a full contribution to the war effort.

The reason for this was that the most important departments of propaganda and censorship in the government of India were run by men who were too afraid of putting the bare facts before the Indian public, partly because these were the most unimaginative set of men that ever ran a government department and partly because of the feeling that if Indians were told how delicate the position in Burma had become, a wave of panic might spread over the country and the war effort might be sabotaged. Odd things happened as a result of the peculiar military censorship exercised in India, which was neither military nor moral nor strategic. For instance, India was never told that Kohima was lost, but the news of its subsequent recapture was blatantly announced in a Reuters message which made prominent headlines in the Indian press, leaving people to wonder why our armies were taking a town which had always been in our possession.

The story of propaganda, censorship and administration in India during the war was more like a script for Bud Abbott and Lou Costello than the story of important government departments.

I remember two incidents that happened to me. On the eve of my departure for Chungking in 1942, when China had been at war some nine or ten years, I went to see the head of the Department of Information and Broadcasting, Sir Frederick Puckle, K.C.I.E., I.C.S. My papers ready and the formalities of visas, passport and permissions completed, I was thanking Sir Frederick for the assistance he had given me. Before leaving I asked

him, "What would you suggest I take with me by way of clothes to Chungking?"

Sir Frederick Puckle, K.C.I.E., I.C.S., leaned back in his chair and thought hard. Then, with his finger on his chin, he said, "Oh! I should think a dinner jacket should be enough." Sir Frederick Puckle was later transferred from the government of India to a department of the British Embassy in Washington and often spoke over the United States radio and on public platforms in America as an authority on Indian affairs!

The other incident occurred over a broadcast script for the All-India Radio, Bombay. I had been asked to do a running commentary on a civic reception to be given to the men of H.M.I.S. *Bengal*, a small ship of the Royal Indian Navy which had sunk a much larger Jap cruiser. It was absurd in the first place to have to present a script for censorship of what was intended to be a running commentary. In this script there was a sentence which read, "Here they come, smartly swinging into Mahatma Gandhi Road." All-India Radio's Bombay chief, the Oxford-returned Mr. Lakshmanan, ran his blue pencil through it. He was carrying out orders, he said, and his latest directive did not allow the name of Gandhi to be mentioned on the air.

"Hell," I said, "what can I do if there is a road named after him?"

"We will have to ignore it, that's all," Lakshmanan calmly replied. "You can say 'a road.' We don't have to mention its name."

In the mood of despondency in which I frequently found myself, I became increasingly critical of everything that happened around me. I found it difficult to stomach the news of the opening of a *Hindu* swimming bath in Bombay when rigid segregation was doing

enough damage already to our unity. It was more distressing to find the opening ceremony performed by a Congress leader, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the hero of Bardoli and other agrarian revolts. I hated this encouragement which tended to increase friction between the groups. Such group isolation was allowed to exist even in sport, and the annual cricket series between the Hindus, Moslems, Parsis, Europeans and the rest showed that the antipathy between the communities was increasing and that even sport was tainted with bias. Incidents like these, however unimportant, were perpetually pinpricking our national conscience.

At about this time, when I was in a despondent frame of mind, the *Bombay Chronicle* decided to send me as a war correspondent on a roving assignment to the Middle East and Europe, leaving it open for me to visit America if it was later possible. It was intended that I should see the curtain fall on the war in Europe and also how whole countries would start recovering after five long and bloody years of war. This chance of escaping from the frustration which I felt in India and of seeing the outer world again in which, during the last few years, so much had happened, was irresistible.

“Escape” was the right word after six years of struggle, both personal and political. Moreover, I had begun to fear being swallowed up in the easy, stagnant life of those around me. Though pleasing to experience, this sort of comfortable living in the East with a handful of servants at our beck and call, comfortable apartments to live in, too much food to eat and too many social functions to attend, was somewhat unhealthy for the mind. As each year passed, the power to resist this easy way had become feeble, and I knew that unless

I went out and saw the outside world that had been at war and had experienced its horrors, I should soon become a parasite in my country.

Thus a few weeks later a C-46 was winging its way from a Bombay airport in the early hours of a December morning. The year was 1944, the sixth year of the war. A damp chill in the air marked our western India "winter." Dawn had yet to break and as I fastened my safety belt and looked down on the old home town, all I could see were the headlights of the family car driving away into the darkness from which I had run away.

At Karachi, the airport of exit from India, there was a slight hitch and I had to stay over for a day. I made use of my time by calling on Sir Gulam Hussain Hydayatullah, the Moslem premier of Sind with whom, many years ago, I used to play bad bridge at high stakes. Gulam Hussain had then been in the news on some provincial issue. Sind was one of the few provinces which was governed during the war by elected ministers instead of through edicts, as elsewhere in India.

Gulam Hussain had stepped into the shoes of his predecessor, Allah Bux, who met his tragic end at the hands of an assassin shooting at him point blank when the victim was riding in a *tonga*. Allah Bux was strong but obstinate. He had a mind and a will of his own. He was not willing to accept all the directives of the Moslem League and was inclined to co-operate with the Congress.

Gulam Hussain offered less resistance. He was a Falstaffian figure, always charming and amiable, but hardly the answer to a turbulent province like Sind. He was a compromise in politics as well as in everything else. Compromise was reflected even in his dress, for he wore

a red fez with an English suit. To carry the analogy to Falstaff a little further, the sleeves of his English coat were worn out, darned and patched. He was glad to see me but he would not give me a formal interview for publication.

"I am a peace-loving man," he said in his lackadaisical manner. "Why do you want to drag me into the columns of the press? Press means controversy."

There was not much I could do after that. He was right. Anything he was likely to say would have raised a controversy, no matter what it was. But that also explained my angling for an interview.

Charming as my host was, it was evident he lacked drive. His personality was admirably suited to the bridge room of the Karachi Club, of which he was an enthusiastic patron, but he seemed hardly strong enough to administer a province where one could not travel from one village to another without some danger to life and limb. The cases that came up for trial before the High Court of Justice of the province showed that crime stood at a particularly high level and that in certain parts of the province a tribal blood feud was regarded as a natural and ordinary affair. If Gulam Hussain succeeded in maintaining some degree of law and order in Sind, it was only because he was a tactful man who knew the province in which he had grown up and who was realist enough to regard perpetual unrest as the natural state of his people. But it seemed equally certain that he was not likely to take any drastic measures to exterminate crime, for such steps would displease certain sections of the province who could make things very difficult for Gulam Hussain and his government.

I had gone to see him in the morning at his house

and later he invited me to call at his office. While the exterior of the secretariat at Karachi was an impressive, modern stone building, his office, which was that of a prime minister, was bare except for a couple of chairs and for the writing table at which he sat. A small, shabby carpet lay on the floor. On the table there was a blotter, an inkwell, a call bell and a box of cigars. There was not a picture on the walls. It looked as if the bailiffs had been in and made the room look like an empty, unfurnished waiting room of a small railway station. There was not a file on his desk. He looked like a passenger waiting for the next train to come.

Nothing happened in this office till an English I.C.S. secretary came into the room with a solitary file. Gulam Hussain excused himself, carefully put on his glasses, turned over the few pages which nestled in the brown-paper file, gently moved the red tape which held the sheets together, initialed a page and gave it back to the Englishman who said, "Thank you," and walked out. From the care with which he handled this quite innocuous document, one would have thought it was a valuable stamp collection.

Then he put his glasses down and offered me a cigar. He had been offering me cigars all morning and I finally decided it was easier to accept one. I said I would smoke it after lunch.

"You better take two," he said with his oriental charm. "One for lunch and one for dinner also."

I could not help contrasting this abortive interview with an Indian prime minister to the more refreshing one I had had a few weeks before with Mr. Richard Casey, the Australian-born governor of Bengal. Casey had succeeded the late Sir John Herbert.

When he first came to India from the Middle East,

where he was Minister Resident, the presence of an Australian at the head of one of our major provincial administrations had offered great offense to the Indians who, tired of being controlled by British governors, felt that dumping an Australian on them was adding insult to injury. Casey's first appearance on the Indian scene was, therefore, unhappy. Later, however, when he declined the honor of knighthood customarily bestowed on governors and requested to remain plain Mr. Casey, he struck a sort of plebeian note which appealed to the Indians. According to Indian values, "Mr." Casey had to be respected more than "Sir" Gulam Hussain Hydayatullah.

Moreover, Casey had a reputation of being easily accessible. He did not stand on the traditional formalities, which other governors of India maintained. The first time I signed his visitors' book as a war correspondent on my way to the Burma front, he invited me for drinks almost immediately. Unable to keep that engagement—for I left for Burma too soon—I called on him again, telling his aide-de-camp that I was in Calcutta only for a day. Casey found time to see me. During that interview, I mentioned to him that I would probably be going in a short while to the Middle East and requested a few words of introduction from him. He got up from his chair, went over to the writing desk and penned a note without any fuss or formality. The letter he gave me, I realized later, might just as well have contained the magic words "Open Sesame," for there was no official door in the Middle East that did not respond to Casey's name.

Casey had other assets. He had the courage to face a situation in Bengal which he knew, when he took it on, was almost hopeless. The legacy left to him by his

predecessor, Sir John Herbert—who must be spared the harshness of criticism only because he is dead—was a bankrupt, famished, exhausted province where 3,000,000 people had died of starvation and where bitterness was so great that men were not in a normal frame of mind and could scarcely be held responsible for what they said or did against the administration.

It was on this scene that Richard Casey arrived, knowing that the task he was undertaking was a thankless one. Without admitting it publicly, he first made himself aware of the mistakes which had been made by his predecessor and of the damage which those mistakes had caused. Casey was quick to see that the first step to revive the moral fiber of Bengal was to rebuild all forms of river transport which his predecessor had ordered to be scrapped, demolished or burned down. On a table in the study in which he received me was the first scale-model of a country craft, of which he had ordered hundreds built to transport rice and food grain from one part of the province to another. Casey looked at this ship model with fond pride, for he knew it would bring new life to the exhausted province and hope to millions who had somehow survived the famine of Bengal.

There was something of the cavalier about Richard Casey. He looked like a hussar with his smartly trimmed mustache, his tall carriage and his aristocratic face. He was big as men go, in a world in which there was a shortage of men of his moral and physical stature. Casey was alive. He moved with the times. Unlike Gulam Hussain who was press-shy and who dreaded a controversy, Casey broadcast to the people of his province every fortnight and explained to them what the food position was—bare facts which were often un-

pleasant to hear. He said to me, "It is better to tell them the worst, so they know how they stand. If you hide it from them, sooner or later they find out, and, in any case, misleading them doesn't help to grow crops." Casey soon arranged with neighboring provincial governments to hold periodic conferences on the food situation in the provinces of the center and the East of India. Under him the whole method of tackling food as well as other problems changed.

The contrast between *Mr. Richard Casey* and *Sir Gulam Hussain Hydayatullah* was too sharply drawn for me to miss noticing the limitations of those Indians who were co-operating with the British administration during the war. It added to the sadness which I felt at seeing my country so out of tune with the times and so devoid of administrators who could face the tasks ahead of them.

At Karachi, I also called at my old college to pay my respects to some of my old professors and to see the men and women who had come from the backwoods of Sind to the mill of education. It was the quarter-hour break between lectures and the students were hanging about the corridors, giving me a chance to observe them *en masse*. The young men seemed somewhat effeminate in comparison to the sturdier types who used to come to college in my time. Theirs was, however, not the sort of positive femininity which is to be found in the homosexuals of the West. It was rather of a negative variety, a mere lack of virility. These young men had arrived at the portals of education a little hurriedly without attaining mental puberty. A stupidity of expression, a silliness in behavior, a noticeable lack of *savoir faire* were their very marked

characteristics. Their hair was heavily greased, combed and parted with care. Their clothes varied from sloppy *khaddar* pajamas, regarded as a sort of national attire, to loud, badly cut, ill-fitting lounge suits, which they believed to be the hallmark of sophistication and smartness.

"They are a mediocre lot," my old professor said to me melancholily. "Flippant, almost childish. You will find they have deteriorated from your day."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"What chance has education had in the last twenty years? Is the state of the country conducive to imparting education? Why, half the time they are in processions shouting slogans, protesting and demonstrating. It's not their fault. It's just the mood of the country."

He told me also of a new college rule by which, for the first two years, the girls were segregated and could not attend the same classes as the boys. Only in the two final years, joint classes were allowed. It was a co-ed experiment with brakes on. It was not like this in my time and the fact that in a graduate college it was now found necessary to separate the girls from the boys, showed that in certain parts of India the younger generation had gone backward in the last fifteen or twenty years.

"Their home education is all wrong," the professor said. "Very often it doesn't exist at all. There is nothing talked in their homes except matters of politics and they grow up believing that education has no importance and that politics is all."

As I watched these Sindhi students, my disappointment was complete. There was nothing positive about them except the strong smell of coconut oil with which they were accustomed to dress their hair, and coconut

oil, especially when it becomes rancid, can be nauseating after a while.

Perhaps I am allergic to smell. James Agate, the English critic, once attributed a strong sense of smell to me. But I believe smells are important. I have seen how the smell of fresh air which came from the Italian mountains charged the Partisan bands with a burning love for freedom and with unbelievable courage with which to fight for the liberation of their country. I have also seen how those Frenchmen who had survived the concentration camps and returned to Paris would sit in the large lounge of the Hotel Lutetia and inhale the perfume which a French woman, passing by, would be wearing and feel the satisfaction of being back home. I remember the smell of Bengal in the days of the famine. It was the smell of frustration, resignation and defeat. Later, in Germany, I remember another smell which I shall never forget—the smell of the Nazi concentration camp at Belsen, which was the smell of humiliation. All these smells have remained with me even as a tune or a familiar melody which one has heard at some unforgettable moment. Therefore, as I smelled the stale coconut oil of the students of the Sind college I wondered how freedom would ever come to them, for those young men did not have the smell of free men on them.

It was unfortunate that these were my last glimpses and smells of India. They seemed momentarily to dampen my enthusiasm for my people and my country. Were it not that there was so much else that I also remembered which was strong and beautiful and unafraid, it would have looked almost impossible that we could ever emerge from this mental and physical stagnation. Long subjection to foreign rule does that

to a people, and even as many as 400,000,000 can live unprogressive lives if they are denied too long the opportunity of living freely and fully.

So it was with mixed feelings of frustration and hope that I left Karachi and India—a state of mind that could drive a more sensitive man out of his senses. I could neither look forward with certainty to anything in particular, nor could I abandon India to its problems and say to hell with it all.

2

After flying from Karachi to Cairo, I went on to Italy and arrived in Naples on a bleak winter afternoon. As I stepped out of the plane I noticed I was being paid more attention than necessary. The officials had mixed me up with a V.I.P. for whom the attention was obviously intended. Within a short while after arrival at the airport, I was on my way to the hotel and not much later I was propped up at the bar of the Sirena. Two hours afterwards a fuming Turk entered the lounge. He was Tarara, the Turkish Ambassador to the Court of King Faruk. My name had been mistaken for his.

The grim drabness of the Italian port was in marked contrast with the color and affluence of Cairo. The cold wet of winter had chilled the Italians. Ten years ago they had worn the cloak of conquerors. Now they had little at all to wear. Bowed and humbled, they walked the streets, their eyes cast groundwards. They appeared ashamed of defeat. Their dream of empire had vanished. Now they were feeling the pinch of hunger and want. They watched eagerly for cigarette stubs which Allied soldiers threw away. The world had no use for empire-builders, old or new.

I left Naples by jeep for Rome the next day. The sun peered through the clouds after many wet and bitterly cold weeks. We drove on the famous Highway Six, which passed through the town of Cassino. In this town there once stood the famous Benedictine mon-

astery, which had guarded for over five hundred years the cultural tradition of that holy order that was enshrined within its walls. But as we approached Castle Hill, there were no signs of civilization. The war had reduced the town to pink and orange rubble. A large notice read:

**IT IS FORBIDDEN TO LEAVE THE ROAD
FROM THE TOWN. THE RUINS ARE SEALED
OFF AND FULL OF MINES AND BOOBY
TRAPS. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED.**

It came as more than a warning. It told a tale which cannot easily be told in words. Cassino has been the scene of one of the greatest battles of World War II. The neat white wooden crosses that stood in clusters were the graves of those many soldiers, but for whose supreme sacrifice the Boche would never have been dislodged from the hill. Here lay the Indians of the Fourth Division, the Gurkhas who were slaughtered at Hangman's Hill; here rested the British guardsmen who were killed in the final sweep into the town; here were the Americans who fought from house to house, the New Zealanders, Canadians, Greeks, French. Twice had Montgomery tried to take Cassino and twice had his Eighth Army returned beaten and battered. Then, after the monastery had been bombed from the air, came the final assault in which the Fourth Indian Division played a spectacular part.

In Italy I first heard of the trail of glory which our fighting men had left behind. The Indians had fought all the way through the desert, through North Africa, and spearheaded the Allied attack into Italy. The Fourth Indian Division had become a legend of the war and two others, the Eighth and the Tenth, were fast equaling its record.

I remember Godfrey Talbot, B.B.C. chief in the Mediterranean, describing to me the battle of Cassino. We had driven together from Rome to see Alexander at Caserta and I had passed through Cassino again. "I shall never forget it," Talbot said as we stood on the same hill from which he had watched the actual battle. "I have seen nothing in this whole war like the charge of the Gurkhas. It was a most fantastic sight. They just died like flies as they crawled up the sides of the hill in face of German fire. What a sight it was!"

I remember the field marshal himself, who was the quintessence of dignity though shy as a thoroughbred race horse, telling me of the Indians who had fought under him. I heard from General Mark W. Clark, who then commanded the Fifteenth Army Group, that "without the Indians the situation might have been serious." I met several British and American war correspondents, soldiers, officers, generals, who did not stint themselves in their praise of the Indians. Even the people of Italy, who had tasted defeat at Indian hands, looked upon my countrymen with awe and respect.

I remember many instances, small though they may be, which made me realize how the name of my country was held in respect in the outside world. Then I used to feel childishly proud that I too came from India.

For instance, as my jeep passed through little Italian towns, the townspeople on reading the word INDIA painted on the front would draw the attention of others to it. That word had some meaning for the Italians. Our ambassadors in khaki had taught them the meaning of that word. It stood for dignity and self-respect; it was the name of a country whose men, even

as conquering heroes, were gentle and courteous to the people they had defeated.

The Indians had fought hard but when they had won their battle, they did not indulge in the sort of vandalism others had committed. It was not an accident that their behavior was exemplary, that they respected the womanhood of conquered countries, that they refrained from looting, and that they were charitable in the hour of victory. These qualities were inherent in the Indian character. They were the heritage of the people. They were part of the culture and tradition of the land.

I remember Pinta Cuda, the onetime speed-track driver, who with Nuvolari drove Alfa Romeos at all the great speed trials of Europe, telling me about the first Indians he saw. I was dining with him in his beautiful old Florentine house in the Piazza Donatello in Florence. Outside his front door a battle had been fought for three whole days while he and his wife, a very lovely Italian blonde, were taking shelter in their cellar. The Piazza was a square and had a garden in the middle of it which was used first by the Germans and later by the Indians as gun sites for their artillery. When the guns stopped firing, Pinta Cuda discovered that Florence had been taken by the Allies. The first soldiers to march into the town were the Indians.

"At first," he said, "we were a little frightened of your countrymen with beards and turbans. They all looked very tough. I told my wife not to go out into the streets because I was afraid for her. In time I discovered I was wrong. The Indian soldiers behaved very differently from what I had expected. On the streets they made way for a woman to pass. They did not whistle at her. They were not loud and boisterous. They did not drink or become rowdy. They did not

go into shops and behave as if they owned the place. They would look at an article and if they liked it, they would inquire about the price. If it was too much to pay, they would quietly put it back. The British or the Americans would have 'liberated' it, as they say."

I remember another incident which occurred when I was driving along the hilly road from Siena to Florence. It was about three in the afternoon, bitterly cold and dry. By mistake the driver and I had each brought a double ration of sandwiches. As a hot meal was waiting for us in Florence, we decided to give the sandwiches left over to some Italian country people, many of whom looked as if they had not eaten for several days.

As the jeep climbed the winding road, my eyes fell on one of the many cemeteries of this war. The graveyard, dotted with crosses, was on the slope of the adjoining hill. As I saw it from above, the crosses made a pattern of white trelliswork against the background of the mountainside, the earth of which was tinged with red. At the far end of the cemetery stood a tall white flagstaff over which fluttered the French flag.

I stood beside the jeep and looked at this peaceful scene, which by strange irony had been created out of war. An old Italian woman, dressed in black and wearing a black scarf over her snow-white hair, had come on the road unbeknown to me. At sight of the cemetery, she stopped and made the sign of the cross. The expression on her face was hard and bitter and there was a sad look in her eyes. She turned to me and said, "*La guerra! La guerra!*"

It was a difficult situation in which to find oneself. Unable to speak the language, I could not explain to

her that my job was only to report on the war and not to take part in the killing. Then an idea occurred to me. From the jeep I produced the tin box in which we carried the sandwiches. I offered them to her, but she recoiled. She said something in Italian in which the only word I could understand was "*Inglese*."

In my pigeon Italian I said, "*Me non Inglese, me Indiano.*"

"*Indiano?*" she asked.

"*Prego*," I said and offered the sandwiches again.

"*Indiano?*" she asked a second time and looked at my jeep driver for confirmation.

"*Si, si*," the jeep driver said. "*Indiano, amico.*"

"*Si, si*," the old girl said smilingly. She stretched out her hand, took the sandwiches and said, "*Molto grazia*," and was gone.

Our soldiers were part of the same army that overran Italy and were as much responsible for the defeat of the Italians as those of Britain and America, but the common people of Italy regarded the Indians as unguilty of the desolation and the destruction of their country.

An Italian journalist said to me, "Your men fought without having any personal motive in our destruction. Indians have no desire of exploiting their victory over us. They are nothing more than professional soldiers." Then he said, "Tell me, how is it that these men fight so well for the British who deny them their freedom?"

It was a question I found difficult to answer. I replied jokingly, "I guess they fight for two square meals a day."

"Men don't fight like that for a plateful of rice and *potage*," he said.

“What would you say they are fighting for?”

He paused and thought for a while. “I believe,” he said, “that men who aspire to freedom are often charged with a spiritual force which enables them to fight inspiredly, no matter for whom they are fighting. The Indians who fought for the British could have fought as well against them.”

With special permission of the Fifth Army, I spent a few days with the forward positions of the O.S.S. and through them met the Partisans, who were operating behind German lines. There was something fascinating about these men and women, who often were fighting with a price on their heads for the liberation of their country. These shoddy, ill-clad, ill-equipped bands of Italians were crusaders in the real sense of the word. They fought without adequate ammunition, often without proper guns or rifles and sometimes with nothing more than a hand grenade. The odds against them were heavy and when captured they paid with their lives.

The Partisans I saw operated in the area between Massa and Bologna. They worked in isolated bands so that they could be agile and illusive. They were unknown to the world as individuals, for they were small people and often of humble stock. But the ideas for which they were fighting were great, and as I ate with them, sat with them and talked to them, I learned what freedom means to man.

So many were anxious to hear about India, not geographically, but in terms of the onward march of its people. Most of them knew about Gandhi and spoke respectfully of him. To them he stood for Indian freedom, and the struggle of freedom everywhere interested them.

Later, the time came for me to return to head-

quarters. A major from the office of Strategic Services came to tell me that I should wait till noon before driving down, for there was to be a special review of Italian Partisans in honor of the major and me! After an early lunch, we solemnly marched in double line to the top of the hill. A few townspeople, chiefly old men and women lined the route as we, guests of honor, marched past. At the Piazza, we waited for the Partisans to come down from a neighboring hill. It was still winter and the mountains were covered with a milky froth, while the valley was a patchwork of brown and white. After a short while I could see a wavy khaki line trickle down the mountainside and I heard the faint strains of men singing till, gradually, they came down the cypress-lined path to the Piazza, where on an improvised saluting base, I stood behind the major as he took the salute. Four deep they lined in front of us and in their full-throated voices sang "*Rebelli*."

It was more than a song; it *was* the rebellion.

While I saw many other things in Italy, including our own divisions, it was the common man and his love for freedom, his fight for peace and dignity, which was more inspiring and more exciting than the day-to-day coverage of the war or the taking of a town or the capture of Germans. Away from India, I was able to appreciate the struggle of our own people and to see it on the broader canvas of the world. I learned that action, more than nonviolence, was needed to sustain a struggle and to inspire men to fight. I also learned that dignity and greatness were not the prerogative of any class, for I had seen so much of these qualities in the humblest and commonest of men.

This was the age of the common man and he was determined to live fully in it. Class was dying everywhere

and its onetime privileges were for all to share. New values had sprung up that would be the basis of a new civilization, and these values were here to stay. It was in fact a new world which unfolded itself before me, and in this new world there seemed no place for Jim Crow cars or for those caste-Hindu temples from which the untouchables were excluded. Human decency was fast becoming the new religion.

3

At the end of seven weeks in Italy I was on a bomber heading for England. My first glimpse of England after an absence of many years was from the air. It lay below me in a checkered pattern of brown and green.

I could feel I had come to a different England from that in which I had stood and sweated before a portly English matron at a tourist agency because I was an Indian. Much had happened to England in the years between. Much had also happened to me.

Whatever may have been the cause of the change, I could not help noticing that the traditional aloofness of the British had thawed to a kindly warmth. It was the warmth of glowing embers. The change was in the hearts of the people. I saw it in the men and women who sat near me in buses, tubes and trams. I saw it in the lounge of the Dorchester, where, at one time, I believed people would never change. It was reflected in ordinary day-to-day life, in the press and the theater.

"Which way are you going to vote, George?" I asked one of my taxi drivers, for it was nearing the time of the general election and according to the best political observers, Mr. Churchill and his Conservative Party were sure to return to power.

"I says what's the good of voting Conservative when this blooming mess we're in is due to them. Let's try something different, I says. Let's give everyone a chance."

"But if Labor comes in," I said, "they'll nationalize everything. Would you want that?"

"Well, I says, if nationalization wins the war, why ain't it good enough for the peace?"

As I traveled over the countryside I noticed the change more and more. As if from nowhere a new generation had come to the fore to take charge of affairs in Britain. It was a healthy, full-blooded generation of young men and women who had in them all that was finest in the English character. Contrary to all theories, the war had proved without any measure of doubt that there was backbone and breeding in the ordinary people even more than in the rich. The war had given the common man a chance to express himself. At the War Office, at the Home Office, in the B.B.C. and in the Houses of Parliament, this new generation, unafraid of taking a decision or of facing the grimmest of realities, had dug in. While some of the older leaders still played their traditional roles, the common man seemed to stand up and utter, "I too have something to say." And he was heard.

There was only one place where there appeared to be no evidence of any change. This was the India Office in King Charles Street. It required more than a war to shake the fossilized minds inside that bleak, dark-gray building in Whitehall, which controlled from a distance of ten thousand miles the destiny of my people.

The Right Honorable Leopold S. Amery, Secretary of State for India, presided over the India Office at that time. Leopold Amery was a small, short man. That was the first thing about him that I noticed. There were strange markings on his face. It was almost square. The way he sat on his high-backed chair and gripped its

arms was typical of that rigid, inflexible stand which he had maintained in his policy towards India. His eyes were small and he wore a look of precision on his face. He was as precise as a mathematical formula. Yet strangely, notwithstanding the look on his face, he appeared to be extremely gentle and courteous. What was more amazing, in spite of his outward self-assurance he was vulnerably sensitive.

It was difficult at first to arrange an interview with Mr. Amery because the British government had learned by long experience that it paid to keep the mouth of its India Secretary shut. Each time Mr. Amery had opened his mouth he had caused a storm in India.

But one fine morning, I found myself ushered into his presence. From the moment I entered his room he set the pace of the interview. He focused the conversation on Imphal in Burma in the days of its siege. He spoke of the vast advances our soldiers had made in Burma and how the military situation had improved from those dark days. "Today *our* armies [meaning the Indian divisions] have reached Mandalay," he said. He went on to praise the great fighting qualities of the Indian soldier. He told me how interested he was in the Indian divisions whom he had recently visited in Italy. In between showering praise and discussing the military situation he asked for my opinion on one or two footling points. I was tempted to believe that this important little man was really canvassing my opinion!

But soon I pulled myself together. I said to him, "Frankly, sir, people in India are not interested in the Indian soldier or in the fighting in Burma. Ten minutes of my allotted time have gone and very soon I will be whisked out of your room. The question which I

came to ask you and to which many of us in India would like an answer is, 'Where do we stand today?' "

This was uppermost in the minds not only of those at home who were politically minded, but of the majority of Indians in the services. While they had fought for the British, they had not remained unconcerned about the political future of their own country. Bitterness was growing in India, not only in the civil population but even in the army. While Britain had obtained everything it needed in the form of material help for the war, it had never received the full moral support of the Indian people.

I agreed with Mr. Amery that if these moral values were not important Britain would not have spent thousands of pounds on propaganda in the United States to justify its policy towards India.

Much against his will and judgment, Mr. Amery spoke. He made the point that unless a constitution was arrived at in India by a broad measure of agreement, the people would not work it. He spoke of the change in the attitude of Parliament towards the Indian question during the last ten years. He said, "I have noticed the change myself. Of course the contribution of India to the war effort has strengthened the feeling in the House that India must be given a place among the other nations of the world—within the Commonwealth or, if she wishes, outside it. That feeling is very strong in the House today but it was there already before the war. But before anything can be done to give expression to that feeling, there must be substantial Indian agreement on the constitution which would lead to that complete freedom. There is, you will understand, a natural reluctance on our part to impose a constitution."

His mind went back to the Cripps offer, the post-dated check drawn on the Bank of Freedom which Britain wanted India to accept in return for full co-operation in the war. Mr. Amery said, "Even in those days when Sir Stafford Cripps worked indefatigably, the Moslem League and the Congress made no attempt to meet." He paused and added, "You realize we must get Indian help in this matter. I have declared half a dozen times since then that the door is still open, but very little effort has been made in India' to arrive at any substantial measure of agreement on what shape or form the new constitution should take. Nor has there been any response to the offer made three years ago, either with regard to the ultimate situation or the interim administration. The Cripps offer was in answer to the charge made against us that we were trading on Indian disagreement.

"The offer still stands in its full scope and integrity," he added, quoting his prime minister, Mr. Churchill.

All this made impressive listening at that time, as statements of people in high office usually do. Their precise, legal phraseology is impressive to the average man and even to a correspondent. The hard fact was that neither Mr. Amery nor the India Office had any conception whatsoever of the changed mood and temper of the country which they were administering from a distance of ten thousand miles.

I then asked him about Lord Wavell's refusal to see Gandhi. Lord Wavell had declined on the ground that no new circumstances had arisen to justify such a meeting. "What would you consider as sufficient to constitute these new circumstances?" I asked Mr. Amery.

Mr. Amery was quick in his reply. He said, "There must be some indication to co-operate with the war

effort and to work out a peaceful evolution of the Indian political situation."

I said that it was not possible for the Congress, while still behind bars, to review the situation anew.

"It is perfectly easy for them to give an indication," Mr. Amery said. "They see the newspapers. They know what is going on."

"But how can they meet or speak as a body," I asked, "when it is not even legal for the Congress to meet? Mr. Gandhi is the only one out of jail and he has only been freed on medical grounds."

"Mr. Gandhi could give the lead," Amery said, and for the first time I could see that little light through the open door. With all his desire and anxiety to see the deadlock in India ended, his pride, the pride of his ruling class, the pride of Tory England would not yield to capture the hearts of those people whose moral support Britain had so desperately wanted.

I did not realize it at that time, but it struck me later as rather odd that a man who was so concerned about his pride and the pride of his people and his country, could not see how much more difficult it was for the Indian, with all his newly acquired ideas of self-respect, to have to swallow his pride and offer a friendly hand to those who had sat on him for many long years.

I think now of that small-town Moslem lawyer who had been my interpreter in that famine-stricken village on the Padma River in Bengal, and of that other Moslem with the young, black, scraggy beard, whose hungry little children had gazed on him as he was dying. I think of that little Hindu boy I had seen cuddled on the doorstep of a shack, his hands holding his head and feeling faint with hunger, who in the bright moonlight which fell on his naked body was crying for a morsel

to eat. I think of those Indians whose bodies were nothing more than skin and bare bones, who had died of hunger in the streets of Calcutta, the second city of Mr. Amery's proud empire. I think of those of my countrymen whom I had seen digging in the dustbins for a scrap to eat. I think also of those men and women who were dragged down from their houses and made to sweep the streets of Matunga. If there was any pride left in India it was unlikely that it would humble itself to give the sort of "indication" which Mr. Amery wanted from Gandhi and the Congress at that time.

As I left India Office and walked down King Charles Street, I turned back and looked at the row of houses at the end of which stood that somber, bleak office of the Secretary of State for India. There was nothing impressive about it except its bleakness. Yet this was the building, wrapped up in cobwebs of tradition, wherein, more than in the Lutyens-designed palace of the Viceroy at New Delhi, more than in the spacious-lawned Government Houses of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, was shaped the destiny of a fifth of the people of the world. Its door was still open but it seemed to lead nowhere.

I walked along Whitehall. Odd thoughts came to my mind. For no particular reason I became conscious of the part played by our soldiers who had fought for Britain and who had left a trail of glory behind them. It was no mean achievement that thirty-three of those awarded the Victoria Cross in this war FOR VALOR IN THE FIELD, were from the Indian army of two million. I thought of some of those men as I passed the Cenotaph and walked towards Trafalgar Square. I remembered their citations, some of which had read like classical prose, if not because of the language, at least because

of the gallantry of action which those words tried to describe. I remembered Lieutenant Bhagat, a sapper, who had cleared fifteen mine fields and fifty-five miles of road to enable our forces to pursue the Italians to Gondar in Abyssinia. It had taken him forty-eight hours to achieve this. I thought of the others: Subedar Richpal Ram, a Jat by race; Havaladar Parkash Singh, a bearded Sikh; Subedar Lalbahadur Thapa, a Gurkha; Jamedar Abdul Hafiz, a Moslem from the Punjab; Sepoy Kamal Ram, a Hindu from the United Provinces; Naik Yeshvant Ghadge, a Maratha from Bombay; Jamedar Ram Sarup Singh, a Rajput from Patiala state; Sepoy Bhandari Ram, a Dogra from the Simla Hills; Havaladar Umrao Singh, an Ahir from the Punjab; Sepoy Namdev Jadhav, a nineteen-year-old villager from Ahmednagar, near Bombay, and Sepoy Ali Haider, a Pathan from the North-West Frontier Province.

These were all once unknown little individuals from India, but somehow, because of the little piece of crimson ribbon which they were entitled to wear, Britain had become aware of them and aware also of the country and the people from which these men came.

Hitherto the problem of India, I said to myself, had never really concerned the people of Britain. It was a specialized subject about which they knew little and wanted to know less. Only those who had some vested interest in my country were concerned about Britain's tightening or loosening its hold over India, for these people were in some way or the other materially affected. But gradually, people in England had become interested in India because of the incongruity of the situation whereby a continent of four hundred million was being denied the very rights which they were fighting to preserve for others. The public meetings in

Trafalgar Square, the utterances of progressive Englishmen who were responsible for shaping the mind and thought of the new Britain could not, consistent with their beliefs, overlook this position.

I did not stay long in England for I flew hurriedly to SHAEF Rear, the base from which war correspondents in the European Theatre of War operated. We were on the eve of the last big push into Germany and as I arrived at the Scribe Hotel in Paris it was to hear the heartening news that all hell had broken loose east of the Rhine. The end of the war was well in sight.

For three weeks before the crossing of the Rhine, the Ruhr had been plastered by some of the heaviest Allied bombing of this war. Air power was being used with paralyzing effect. The six hundred square miles of the Ruhr had been virtually reduced to pulp. Complete devastation was reported from every section of that wide front. German towns had been left burning and charred. Nothing could save Germany now, for the Rhine, the last strong bastion of German defenses, was lost. Only God could save the Germans from extinction and God did not appear to be on their side.

Soon I crossed the Rhine into Germany and saw what destruction meant. Very little was left along those hundreds of miles of road over which we drove. The big towns presented a staggering sight, for the devastation had been complete. Nothing had escaped the bombing or the artillery fire except a few isolated farm houses. At Münster, where there once lived 150,000 people, I saw only two solitary nuns come out of the cathedral and disappear into the surrounding debris. Nobody could tell where the inhabitants of this great cathedral town had disappeared. There was something tragic

about the whole scene, and the overbearing stillness of the place made it appear haunted. There was no evidence of life. There was not a bird or even a dead rat to be seen.

As we entered each devastated town, our jeep slowed down almost as a mark of respect at the tragedy which lay before our eyes. Then somewhere in the Ruhr itself, not far from the Krupp factory, my eyes caught sight of a large board on which a slogan was inscribed in bold, vivid letters. The British army captain who was with me in the jeep knew German and he translated the slogan for me. It was a line from one of Hitler's speeches which read, "Give me five years and I will give you a different Germany." It was to have been a Germany of blond Aryans, a Germany from which all other "inferior" races would be exterminated and in which only the superrace would survive. But the men and women I saw around me, few though they were, hardly appeared to be part of that superrace which, at those great Nazi rallies at Munich, Nuremberg and elsewhere, had shouted in full-throated voices, "Down with the Jews." As I passed them on the road I saw them looking down and many would hold their hands over their faces, partly in shame, partly in horror of the sights they saw, pretending they were covering their faces only to keep away the dust.

Somewhere along the road which went through the Ruhr, my eyes fell on a large effigy of Christ mounted on the Cross. White flowers had grown beneath it. It was the only sign of color in those drab, somber surroundings. At this wayside shrine I saw an old German woman kneel and bow her head. The signs along the road said **KEEP MOVING**. The Germans knew what it meant to keep moving.

The fall of any nation is pathetic for a sensitive man to watch and I felt sad at seeing the Germans laid so low. Defeat in man, however deserving, is a pitiful sight. Yet it was difficult to feel sorry for the Germans, for I had seen another sight in Germany which killed all pity for the Germans in me. This sight was that of the Nazi concentration camp at Belsen. I entered it soon after the British Second Army freed the place. Here, behind barbed wire in an area of one square mile, were the victims of the Nazi terror. The ten thousand survivors lay huddled like swine. In many of them life was gradually ebbing away. In one corner of the camp I saw two large piles of dead men and women, lying naked before me. There were penknife gashes on these bodies, and one could see where the heart and the kidneys had been removed, for here at Belsen man had so degraded himself that in desperation he had resorted to eating man. Belsen was the Nazi way of punishment for the Jews, the "inferior race."

Therefore, when defeat came to this superrace of blond Aryans there was little sympathy one could feel for them. Finally in the early hours of the morning of May 7th, 1945, at the little town of Rheims in France, in an unassuming red-brick building, this superrace unconditionally surrendered. Inside this red-brick building, once a school of technology but at that time General Eisenhower's headquarters, the war in Europe ended. The Nazi terror, which had spread like a storm over Europe, uprooting mighty trees, which were once great people and great countries, had ended. The mills of God had ground slowly but they had ground exceedingly fine. They had reduced to pulp the race superiority of Adolf Hitler, squeezing every ounce of that way of thinking out of those killers with thin, sadistic lips

and murderous eyes, who had run the horror camps of Belsen, Buchenwald, Oswiecim, Dachau and Maidenek. That was the meaning of that little scene which I saw at Rheims, and as we drove back to Paris in our jeep I saw the new dawn as it crept over a little French village. The sun was shining again in Europe and little French children were laughing under God's own sky. They were the children of the common man.

From that scene in Europe, stopping for a while in England again, I came to America.

It was my first visit. Except for Russia, America was the only important country which I had not seen. I had looked forward to my visit, for America appeared to be the eventual destination of every freedom-loving man. To an Indian who had long fought the British, America held out hope for the future. More than shattered Britain, more than the pock-marked, hungry, devastated countries of Europe, more than the scorched towns and cities of Soviet Russia, America was the one clear light which shone in the darkness of our age.

There were the green fields of Tennessee. There was the thick smoke of Pittsburgh, the rich tone of the deep South, the serene calm of New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine. There was the immaculate beauty of New England and the neutral hues of the Northeast. There was strength in the open West.

All that was America and more. Its largeness was only comparable to the largeness of its heart. The tall skyscrapers pointed heavenwards as if all living was dedicated to God.

In America you could reach for the sky and touch it. You could write across it: *Pepsi-Cola*. There was fascination in such strength, power in such limitless

material wealth which could produce both guns and butter.

Through the years I had looked forward to the day when my ship would bring me into the harbor of New York where I could pay homage to the lady who bore aloft the torch of freedom.

It was on the *Queen Elizabeth* I arrived. It was a bright morning, appropriately an *Indian* summer's day. From the sports deck I got my first glimpse of the New World. More and more appeared on the horizon until I beheld the sky-line of New York which I had seen before only in the movies which came our way.

Silhouetted against an untidy landscape was the Statue of Liberty. Little barges floated around her, intruding on that classic scene. Americans coarsely exulted when I thought they should have been calm and serene. For one who had come all the way from India to see the Lady with the Torch, it was disappointing to find that there was no dignity in her surroundings. The pale, sickly green to which her bronze had turned seemed incongruous when I thought of the richer red with which I had seen her sons smear the battlefields of the world, so that she might still carry the torch of freedom.

Most of the 15,000 men on board our ship were American soldiers, members of an infantry division returning home. They had a different look in their eyes from that which I had seen in those same eyes in Europe. An aching nostalgia had been relieved as, after years spent away from home, they came within sight of their homeland.

"It's the best country in the world," G.I. Joe said to me as he leaned on the railing beside me.

"What is so wonderful about it?" I asked.

"Gee, it's my home," Joe replied. "It's where my wife is, and my mother and my child." My eyes scanned his sleeve. He was wearing six overseas stripes.

My case was different. I was not going back to anything. I was visiting a new country for the first time. If I felt any emotion, it was because as a younger man I had looked upon America as the land wherein was worshiped that cherished possession of civilized man—his freedom.

This was the continent, Lincoln had said, which was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men were created equal. For us who were still struggling to be free, those words were soul-stirring. To an Indian, full of zest and ideals, the Lincoln Memorial had some meaning. While the Taj Mahal at Agra and the snow-clad Himalayas compelled our reverence, we looked upon the Lincoln Memorial as a common shrine embodying the ideals for which my people had fought and for which they were perpetually striving.

As the *Queen Elizabeth* neared the docks, a navy blimp came over our ship, spouting jazz music.

"What a welcome!" Joe said to me. "Would you get that anywhere else in the world?"

I looked up at the airship over us. It was manned by several men. I thought of the gas it consumed, the energy it used up, the manpower and material which had gone into its making. Now, on the return of G.I. Joe, it was playing music for him. To Joe, at this emotional moment of his life, it sounded like grand opera. To me, it was just a silly little tune.

My mind went back to some of the other countries where such a welcome was not possible. I thought of April, 1942, when at the dead of night my plane landed

on the dry river bed at Chungking. It was pitch dark and not even the stars would shine on blacked-out China. Those were the days when in tiny little fighting planes American boys of the A.V.G. were fighting under Chennault to keep the Jap out of Chinese skies. In China at that time there was not enough gas to spare to fill a cigarette lighter, nor were the planes of the A.V.G. really fit for combat, for they were obsolete, battered, and so very small. But the hearts of the men who flew them were big. And to me as an Indian, those young Americans culled from the mills, farms and factories of the United States were more representative of the greatness of that country than the blimp at New York harbor, playing a Bing Crosby number.

"Perhaps our sense of values is different," I said to Joe. For the first time I felt the difference between our two civilizations, our cultures, our heritage and our upbringing. There was a great gulf between Joe-the-American and me. It was not the sort of difference which Kipling, conscious of his empire, had spoken. At the same time it was apparent that Joe and I could not belong to the same "One World" of Wendell Willkie, for we were at different stages of civilization. My whole emotional, mental and spiritual make-up differed from that of Joe. We had been nursed in different schools of ideology. To Joe it was the sky-line of New York, along with the Empire State, Chrysler and R.C.A. buildings, which symbolized the civilization of his country. They stood for the progress which his people had made through the years. Eighty-odd storys halfway up to the sky was achievement. They stood for efficiency, wealth, ordered living and discipline of the mind. These were

- the qualities which had turned the scales between de-

mocracy and Nazi domination. They stood for the *power* which was America.

Joe expressed this less happily when he said, "Look at that sky-line. It cost plenty. You know how many million bucks they are worth? Gee, I wouldn't like to say."

I thought of my country in terms of Joe. I thought of the dire poverty of its people. I remembered the famine of Bengal and those men, women and children I had seen perish in those villages. I thought of the thousands who had become deformed, their abdomens swollen and their legs filled with water because in desperation they had drunk too much *fan*—the starch water of the rice.

I thought of the wealth of my country too, material wealth. I thought of the Nizam of Hyderabad, a little old man who, if he fancied, could have bought a whole skyscraper just to house his harem.

But it was not the Nizam of Hyderabad who constituted my country's wealth. It was rather the civilization that had grown up on the banks of the Ganges; it was Tagore and Raman who, from a country of 12 per cent literacy, had won the Nobel prize; it was Gokhale, Ranade and Gandhi, who, from our point of view, almost corresponded in stature to Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt, and who had awakened our slothful continent from its slavish lethargy and made it possible for my generation of Indians to walk over the face of the world with our heads held high; it was the men who had fought for our freedom, whether it took the form of fighting the British overlord or the German or Japanese invader; it was the passive resisters who, in those hectic days of non-co-operation, had bared their breasts

and said to the armed military squads that faced them, "Go on, fire!"

Our wealth was to be found as much in the somewhat primitive men who, in the wilds of Satara, had formed a village republic, as in the men of the Fourth Indian Division who had perished on Hangman's Hill, spear-heading the Allied attack on Cassino in the greater war for the liberation of humanity.

All this was a small fraction of our wealth. Not all Americans seemed to understand this undefinable wealth of ours, or this civilization which was ours too. It was a different kind of civilization from that which made it possible for iced water to come out of hotel taps in New York—to the bewilderment of Indians who arrived there for the first time.

At first I believed that there was a strange similarity of habits and character between the American and the Indian people. On a short journey in an Indian train it was quite normal to be asked by a fellow passenger who you were, what your father was, what you did for a living, how much you earned, how many children you had—all depending on the length of the journey. It was the Indian's native way of showing his friendly feeling. On an English train, by comparison, if on the long journey from St. Pancras Station right across the island to Scotland an Englishman turned around to you and said, "Fine day!" he had reached the limit of his fraternization. Americans were more like the Indians. They talked to me in the streets, in restaurants, in trains and all sorts of places. But there was a slight difference. While they did ask me a few questions, they were generally telling me, of their own accord, who they were, what they did, and of what company they were president or vice-president.

I do not say that this was true of all the American people, but it was my first impression. Whichever way the conversation began, it generally added up to one thing, namely, that America was the best country in the world. I often felt like saying to these Americans, "There are other countries in the world, you know. There are other cities too. They may not have tall skyscrapers but they have so much else to offer." I was thinking then of the charm of Paris as I knew it before the war and, in spite of our many differences with the British, I remembered London with its unassailable dignity. New York with all its affluence somehow lacked these qualities.

One could not, however, help being impressed by New York's efficiency, its labor-saving devices, its magnificent shops, its rich merchandise, its high standard of living, its modern, streamlined exteriors, its spick and span appearance, its ordered planning, its clean, wide streets and its methodic, almost scientific approach to everyday life. One missed sometimes the languor of the Orient and the grace of living which was still part of the Old World across the pond. In New York everyone seemed always to be in a hurry. There was no time to relax, no pause for thought or beauty. One did not have a feeling of living in a grown-up, mature city. There was no depth of feeling in it. It was modern, it had fine, shapely lines, but there was no power behind it. People were constantly coming and going through New York. It was more like a jam session than a Bach sonata.

I was having a drink at the King Cole bar at my hotel when I found myself in conversation with an American propped up against the bar beside me. He looked "a real American": a cigar in the side of his

mouth, he wore a loud multicolored tie and carried a straw hat. He was interested in me because of the shoulder badge on my uniform, which read BRITISH WAR CORRESPONDENT. But my swarthy complexion and my un-English features bothered him somewhat. I told him I was an Indian. He pulled his cigar out of his mouth, put out his hand and said, "We like Indians out here. You're okay." He spoiled the welcome by proceeding to tell me who he was. He was a vice-president of a company. He said he knew a man in India, but he couldn't remember the name. One day he was going "out there" when he had the time.

More simple, more naïve and more colorful was my conversation with a burly Negro on Fifth Avenue the day after I arrived in New York. I had always wanted to hear first-hand a Negro say "Yeah, man," just as they said it in the movies. As I walked down the avenue I saw him right in the flesh, so I stopped him and asked, "Excuse me, could you direct me to Fifth Avenue?" He looked at me somewhat perplexed, then looked around and took his bearing. Then he said, "Yeah, man, this sho' is Fif' Avenoo. No kiddin'."

He took another look at me, summed me up as a stranger and added, "You kinda noo to this place?"

I told him that I was from India and that I had just arrived.

In an unforgettable, almost soprano voice he exclaimed, "You don' say!" He put out his hand and added, "I sho' welcome yoo to *mah* country."

Shades of Lincoln, I thought. All this colorful blending into the same pattern of American democracy and freedom was fascinating for an Indian to watch. La Guardia, Cohen, Abruzzio, Aumiller, Cooper, Dziuk, Dzingiulewsky, Levy, Olson, Smith, Tobias, Van Steele

—they all felt they were Americans. That was the wealth of the United States. It was the American way, I had once believed, and as I looked back on the tense religious scene in my country I felt we could do with some of that unity.

There was wealth in America, there was democracy and there was liberty, but not as much as I thought. I found it difficult to understand why it was that in this land of four freedoms, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men were created equal, in the Year of Grace 1945, at the end of the Second World War in which three hundred thousand Americans had paid with their lives fighting for democracy and freedom, a Negro who claimed to have equal rights in Washington, D. C., was pushed out of a front seat in a bus as soon as he had crossed the bridge into the state of Virginia. All this happened within sight of the Lincoln Memorial.

One day I went to Washington to see this memorial. I remembered the day in India when in a movie house I saw an unforgettable scene. It was in the picture, "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington." A little boy was reading the inscription on the granite walls of the memorial. The boy was holding the hand of an old man who might have been Lincoln himself. I had listened to those words with great respect for they had real meaning for me. They stood for all the things we were fighting for: government of the people, by the people, for the people; freedom; democracy; the equality of man.

Now it was my turn to stand under the towering presence of Mr. Lincoln as he sat there on his marble throne and he seemed to look down at me and say, "You have come a long way, son."

I had come as a pilgrim to his shrine. From where I stood I thought he looked sad and disillusioned. Perhaps it was the light casting deceptive shadows, perhaps it was because of what was happening across the bridge in the state of Virginia, where the deep South began.

When I thought of the wealth and abundance, the power and richness with which God had graced that continent, leaving it unscarred by war while other countries had been ravaged, devastated and laid low, I thought it a pity that America should make a mockery of all the great ideals for which so many of its sons had fought and died. America had everything under the sun. It had oil, coal, iron and steel. It now produced atomic energy. Everything on God's earth was in America and if it was not, the Americans could make it pretty soon.

At the end of World War II, America was strong. The British with an empire of their own had humbly asked America for a loan. The French and the Chinese had also come to beg and borrow for their worn-out lands. Russia after Stalingrad was limp, so they said. The Germans and the Japanese would never rise again. No one was left to match America, now the top nation of the world.

With so much power, wealth and potential, it was disappointing to see how little humility there was in the land. That was to me a great disappointment. Humility is an essential requisite of all great peoples. Because of the lack of it, great empires had declined and fallen in the past, even as the supermen of Hitler's Third Reich, the blond Aryans of the Nazi Germany, had bitten the dust.

But these were only abstract sorrows. Personal sorrow was yet to come. One day it came.

It was in a Florel hat I first saw her. Chance had brought her to our table that night. We seemed to have come from the far corners of the world to find each other, though at that moment it was only the meeting of a man and a woman. That was how we met. That evening I once ruffled her hair.

I knew we would meet again. It was written in the book of words, for we spoke a common language and belonged to one world. Together we found peace. The world seemed ours to hold.

Outside, at that same time, an orgy broke. The people, herded like cattle, were exulting. On Fifth Avenue, the street was littered. The war, they shouted, was over. The Japs had surrendered. Peace had come to earth. What a far cry from Pearl Harbor this day was, with the Japs whipped into subjugation! Two whole cities of Japan had been blasted by two single atom bombs.

As I looked out of the window of my room on the seventh floor of the St. Regis Hotel, onto the Manhattan landscape with its tracery of bright lights and the silhouettes of its tall skyscrapers, I shared the relief which came to men all over the world with the end of the war. Far back I remembered the days of Chungking, held together with only string and bamboo, for that was all the Chinese could afford. I remembered also the Japs climbing the Burma map from Lashio to Myitkyina, leaving the Allies not a single airfield between India and China. I remembered the nights in Imphal with the Japs hiding in the neighboring hills. It had been a monotonous, long-drawn war.

I thought then of those Italian Partisans dying like flies on the mountainside with a song on their lips, of hungry children freezing in the biting winter, and of

the long lines of crosses which dotted the countryside. I thought of England too, pock-marked by the blitz, with gaps in its familiar landscape, and of the men who would never be able to reset their broken limbs and lives again. I remembered Germany also, with town after town reduced to rubble and debris, with its charred homes and wandering people.

In New York on that somber gray morning, all the horrors of war lay far behind as the church bells rang and the sirens blew. There could have been no more fitting place for ushering in a new era of peace than this land of abundance, which I once believed was both the forging house of human liberty and the granary of the world.

That was the morning. I remember it so well. Circumstances had altered my personal life and what was left was hers if she so wanted, I told her. In a gray, speckled apron she heard me. Her eyes were gaily lit, her hair like a field of corn. Together we thought of the future.

She had a child by a former marriage. Often he would cuddle us both. Together we would roam the world, we said, holding between us her little child and the children she was yet to bear. One world. Different shades, but a world with meaning, a world with grace, charm, dignity and greatness. It was a vision beautiful to behold.

But then the clouds grew dark around us. Our lives were not our own. The people around her hemmed us in. Our future became their concern. New words, new ideas and new values appeared on the scene. For those around her I did not have a name, or a race, or a country. They saw only a shade of color on my face.

"But`father..." she moaned. She differentiated be-

tween shades and shades. It was the first of her apologies for me.

I became aware of claws closing in. India was a land with an *alien* civilization, the voice of old America thundered.

"Dark faces!"

"Poverty!"

"Squalor!"

"Disease!"

"They lived in grass huts, those Indians. *White* people could never live amidst them."

In India women walked ten paces behind the men, they told me. Wives were only chattels, and caste marks were tattooed on their foreheads.

Naked men roamed the streets, and it was only on spikes they sat.

All that was India to them. Nothing one could say could change it.

There were tears in her eyes that night. I watched them flow. The little boy watched his mother cry. As I tucked him in bed he put his arms around me. "I want to live with you," he said innocently. It was the one nice thing I heard.

The storm grew. Life became for us a living hell. We saw each other but between us there came a shadow of despair. We did not smile any more.

At first her love did not waver. It grew strong. In a beautiful woman it was a glorious sight. I saw the fight in her. Her eyes would sparkle. The lids would quiver.

She asked of India and I told her the tale. I painted it grim and dark and black lest it should ever redound on me. I told her what there was and what was yet to be had. With me she stood and from my side she would

never budge. Her house, she said, would always be my home.

The storm grew nearer. There was drama, pathos and so much bitterness. Fear crept into her people's hearts, for they thought she would be lost to them. Their tone changed. Outwardly they appeared less offensive than before. They pleaded for their old age. They consoled me that it was not as a man I was wrong, except for that shade of color on my face. Then behind my back they had my past checked as if I were common sod. They had my father checked, my mother, all of us. They could find no blood on our hands.

A Hindu spell I had cast on her, the mother said.

"But, mother, he is not a Hindu."

"Perhaps it's voodoo, but a spell of some sort."

In brutal, rapid-fire questions I was asked about my country and my people. Did my mother speak English? Did we have hot and cold running water in taps? Was it true all Indians served only as clerks?

For her sake I answered these questions. Taken unawares I forgot myself. I lost my self-respect. I justified myself. I floundered for proof. Once I even brought a letter of my mother's to show she could write. I lost my balance of mind. I forgot who I was, my heritage, my people and the tradition of my country. A woman sometimes does that to a man.

But for her and for the sake of them who were old, the humiliation was not hard to bear. I felt it was due, for I was taking away something that mattered to them. They spoke of honor and all the other values in life which I had been brought up to respect.

There was little of these in them, for one day they played their trump card. "You will be dead to us as a daughter," they told her. "We cannot stop you but for

the child we will fight in every court in this land with our last dollar and our last drop of blood."

Then I knew I had lost. At first I did not want to believe it. The days passed and I noticed we began to grate on each other's nerves.

She saw me breaking. Like a ship without anchor, I found nothing to cling to. There were no friends to confide in.

I felt I had become a burden to her. I could see her attitude change imperceptibly but surely. Her faith in herself was shaken, and her faith in me grew less.

One day it broke. I was cast out of her heart. So I left.

•It was a Monday evening around 9 o'clock, October, 1945. I was wearing my uniform of a war correspondent and as I walked to the corner towards Park Avenue, I felt my beret limp in my hand. It was the cap I had worn in many a theater of war.

I thought of what I had lost that day: I had lost my faith in a beautiful woman; I had lost my faith in a new world; I had lost heart. My self-respect was gone; my pride as a man was hurt.

Only pride of race remained.



14

The remaining days in New York were heavy. My plans to return to Europe that winter had to be discarded. The urge was too strong to return home in order to regain the confidence I had lost. In defeat, I turned to the country of my people.

Among the last persons I saw in the United States was the Indian Minister Resident at Washington, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai. This tiny little Hindu, standing not more than five feet tall, had all the culture of my country concentrated in him, even though politically he was a little out of tune with the mood and tempo of the people he represented. In spite of the difference that lay between his conservatism and the impatience of my generation, one could not help liking him. His manner was so suave and polished, his humor so neat and dry, and his outlook on life so liberal and cultured. I remember him describing one of the new British Labor ministers to me. Bajpai blandly said, "The embarrassing ease with which he dropped his *h*'s was rather fascinating."

Bajpai noticed, or perhaps he had some indication, that things had not gone the right way for me in the United States. He knew I was bitter about something and he had a shrewd idea of the cause of that bitterness.

The conversation thereafter turned on race, culture and breeding. He spoke like a man reciting a chapter from Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, a favorite book of mine.

Then he said to me, "But you are a Parsi. You are the aristocrat of the Aryans."

I realized afterwards what was in Bajpai's mind when he made that remark. His emphasis on the antiquity of my Aryan stock was intended as a reminder to me that I was more Aryan than the people by whom I had been hurt. But aristocracy of race was furthest from my mind at that time. My predominant feeling was that I was an Indian and that I shared, at that moment, all the hopes and sorrows of my country and its people. Nor was there much point in being an aristocrat of any sort whatsoever in an age that was so pronouncedly that of the common man. I preferred to judge myself—and to judge others—by the standards laid down in the 2,000-year-old Code of Manu, in which it was said, "A man who is not an Aryan is betrayed by behavior unworthy of an Aryan."

Soon afterwards I caught the A.T.C. plane which brought me back to India. The world did not seem so spread out when one could hop halfway across it in a little over two days. About two o'clock we landed on the air strip at Karachi and a jeep drove me the twenty-one miles into town. It was a cold, dark but clear night. I flew to Bombay the next morning. As I landed at Juhu aerodrome and walked across the field, I saw the familiar cluster of faces that I knew so well.

For the first time I became aware that my father had never worn a turban and that there had never been any tattoo marks on my mother's forehead. There was, however, one quality which typified them. They had an infinite capacity for understanding.

"Compose yourself," my mother said.

In the year I had been away I had seen the Nazi

dream of empire shattered. Here in India the curtain was falling on another scene, as gradually but surely, a country of 400,000,000 was nearing its hour of liberation. An empire which had held its sway for nearly one hundred and fifty years showed signs of coming to an end.

Looking at the everyday Indian scene, one would not at first have thought so. The Gateway of India still stood solid in its brown granite, marking the spot where George V had set foot as emperor of India. But when I looked beyond it, at the ships of the Royal Indian Navy anchored in the harbor, I saw the ships' guns pointed menacingly at us. The Indian navy was in mutiny.

Again, when I went to the races at Mahaluxmi, I saw the governor of Bombay, symbol of the British *raj*, arrive *in state* as in days before the war. He was driven in a gilded, horse-drawn carriage with an escort of bodyguards and flunkies in attendance. He alighted from his carriage and stepped on the familiar red carpet spread over the lawn of the members' enclosure. A brass band played "God Save the King." Indians wearing gray morning coats and top hats stood at attention. Gandhi caps stilled for a few moments. Then the totalizers ticked, and in the bookies' ring punters wagered in thousands.

Yet, not far from that same race course in Mahaluxmi, the police and the military had clashed with the people. Riots had broken out in sympathy with the naval mutineers and had done damage to life and property. Crowds had been fired upon. Many hundreds of people were killed. Curfew was in force in many parts of the city.

"Unidentified bodies are still lying unclaimed in the

morgues of various hospitals," said the Associated Press of India message. "In the morgue of the King Edward Memorial Hospital there are twenty-two unclaimed bodies; in the Seth Harkisondas Hospital there are three, of whom one is a boy of nine years...."

A columnist in a Sunday paper wrote on this unknown boy of nine. He said:

It was the body of a beggar boy attired in rags which were too big for his shrivelled-up frame. There was no need to perform an autopsy on him. They would have found nothing in his caved-in stomach, not even a few grains of undigested rice.

A couple of newspapermen saw, from atop a six-storeyed building, the grim drama of this nobody's death in the street below. From such a height the boy looked even smaller, just a little child in rags, one of those 'Dead End' kids playing in the gutter. But he was not playing. He was leading the procession of urchins, shouting defiant slogans. Military lorries passed menacingly close. But he was unafraid. Then a volley was fired and he doubled up with a bullet in his stomach. But it was only the first. With the cry of a wounded animal, like one demented, he rushed to grapple with the man-with-the-gun. But the boy got what was coming to him: a pattern of holes in his body. By the time the newsmen could rush down into the street, he was lying sprawled in the centre of the road, looking up at the sky with eyes that could not see. His agonized lips formed the two words that were his battle cry. Then he was dead.

"This," said the columnist, "is the body of an Indian who died with *Jai Hind* on his lips."

That week end in the ballroom of the Taj Mahal Hotel, Sonny Lobo and his orchestra played as usual and the dancers encored a new Calypso number. No one was perturbed about the firing in the city because

skirmishes like these had become a normal feature of Indian life.

There were a lot of other things happening in India which, to a casual observer, did not make sense. When the Fourth Indian Division returned home after its glorious record, the governor and the mayor turned out to welcome them, but the people were not there. The gallant Fourth never got the heroes' welcome which was their due. They had fought for the British!

Elsewhere in India at the same time, Indians were cheering another group of soldiers—the men of the Indian National Army which, under the leadership of Subhas Bose, had fought with the Japs against the British. On a charge of treason, their officers were tried by a court-martial at the Red Fort at Delhi. A galaxy of Indian lawyers collected by Jawaharlal Nehru conducted the defense. The defense maintained that while the men on trial were guilty of having fought against the king, they were not guilty of having fought against their country. The law by which these men had been tried did not have the sanction of the people of the land.

The court-martial returned the verdict of "guilty." But when the time came to confirm the sentences, the British general, Sir Claude Auchinleck, commander-in-chief of India, surprised everyone by releasing the men. Auchinleck was bowing to popular feeling in the country, which now sympathized with any form of rebellion against the continuation of British rule.

The men of the INA were cheered wherever they went in India. Those of the Fourth Division returned to their villages unnoticed. Such was the mood of the country.

Through India ran one clear emotion. Freedom was

the first love of every Indian whether he belonged to a division controlled by the British or to a rebellious army which had turned against its rulers. The Muslim wanted freedom as much as the Hindu, the prince as much as the peasant. The British were convinced that independence was a national demand, even though India appeared to be divided horizontally and vertically on social, religious and economic issues.

The shouts of *Jai Hind* which came from the lips of unknown little men and filled the air, expressed this emotion more accurately than did the speeches of our better-known politicians. *Jai Hind* meant "Victory to India." It was the battlecry of the INA and the slogan of the *Azad Hind* government which Bose had formed on the Malayan continent.

On the issue of freedom, there were no two opinions in the country. The question which was unsettled in the minds of the people was: "Should the British leave India as an entire unit or should the country be divided into two free and autonomous states, Hindustan for the Hindus and Pakistan for the Moslems?" On this the Congress and the Moslem League differed strongly.

Soon after the war was over in 1945, the electorate was called to the polls. The elections took place within a month or two of my return. The people were to choose their representatives for the Central and the provincial legislatures. The electorate for the former was based on a franchise of one per cent of the population. That of the provinces on the wider franchise of 10 per cent of the population. In the Central elections, based on the more restricted franchise, the Moslem League won every seat which it contested in the Muslim constituencies on the issue of Pakistan. Upper-class

and educated Moslem India solidly supported Jinnah in his demand for Pakistan. In the elections for the provincial legislatures, based on the wider franchise, the results created some confusion. In four of the six provinces which Jinnah claimed for Pakistan, he secured a majority of Moslem votes, but the victory was not as great as in the Central elections. In the fifth province, Baluchistan, there were no elections. That province was governed by a representative of the governor-general and there was no council functioning there. In the vital sixth province of the North-West Frontier, where the Moslems totaled about 92 per cent of the provinces' population, Jinnah lost decisively. The Congress and its allied party, the Jamiat-ul-ullema, won the North-West Frontier Province. The results in this predominantly Moslem North-West Frontier province maimed Jinnah's demand for Pakistan.

The result of the elections was, therefore, that Jinnah had neither won nor lost decisively. His demand for Pakistan could neither be accepted *in toto* nor completely rejected. The elections solved no problems nor did they clarify any issues. They merely revealed the strength of the respective parties. They showed that Congress had the support of about 70 per cent of the Indian population which included all Hindu and other minorities, except the Moslems. The Moslem League represented the majority, but not all, the Moslems.

The Congress was now acknowledged as the most articulate unit of political opinion in India. But the general elections of 1946 proved that Congress was not the only representative of India. In arriving at any solution of the Indian problem, the Moslem League would henceforth have to be reckoned with. Without

the League's concurrence in any arrangement arrived at, there could be no lasting peace in the country.

It was, however, difficult to determine correctly the basis of the following of the Moslem League. Its leader, Jinnah, had often spoken with two voices. When he addressed the outside world, as when he spoke to the Associated Press and United Press, of America, Jinnah visualized Pakistan as a "democracy, regardless of caste, creed and religion," yet when he addressed Moslem audiences in India there were abundant references in his speeches to the laws of Islam and the Holy Koran, and there was always his insistence that Moslems were a separate nation entire in themselves.

In the months that followed, the gulf between these two main political parties widened. The tension between them grew. The vision of a united India became blurred.

The Congress wanted independence with a united India. Jinnah and the Moslem League wanted independence too, but also the separation of Moslem India from Hindu India as a condition precedent to independence.

Out of this basic conflict a new force emerged. It was an undefinable, intangible force. In reality it was nothing more than co-ordinated unrest.

In the past, as far back as 1921, it had been part of the political theory adopted by Gandhi and the Congress that a constant wave of unrest was necessary in order to thwart the British-controlled administration. Gandhi believed that the government, being responsible for the preservation of law and order in the country, would tire of being faced continually with an internal situation so far from normal. Through perpetual strife, India would receive her baptism of free-

dom. With each civil disobedience movement, unrest spread over the wider areas and at key points its intensity deepened.

There was, however, one essential feature which characterized the unrest caused by the civil disobedience movement. The unrest was always nonviolent in form. Gandhi had insisted on nonviolence, for he aimed at creating a mental rather than a physical condition. While this was peculiar to the political philosophy which he preached, the restraint which he imposed upon the masses was somewhat unnatural. The non-violence of the people was *ersatz*.

In 1942, this position changed. Taking advantage of Gandhi's remarks on the August resolution, when he said that every Indian should henceforth behave as if he were a free man, this restraint was for the first time lost. Gandhi maintained that he gave no license for violence and that his remarks were always intended to be within the limitations of nonviolence, which was still "the breath of his life." But the people appeared to prefer their own more flexible interpretation of his words and regarded themselves free to give physical vent to their pent-up feelings.

The years that followed 1942, therefore, saw the transition in the mass mind from nonviolence to violence. There appeared to be greater sympathy in the country for direct action with violence than without. Beneath the main political current which ran along nonviolent though revolutionary lines, was a faster undercurrent which showed signs of overreaching the Congress and the Moslem League, of going beyond Gandhi and non-violence.

At first, concurrently with the force of the nonviolent resistance, this undercurrent of violence was directed

against the British and their interests. But later, as this undercurrent gained ground in the country, it threatened to upset the hard and fast positions into which political parties in India had dug themselves. It seemed to show no respect for *mahatmas*, *maulanas* and *pundits*. Without a flag, without a name or a tag to distinguish it, it seemed to move on from strength to strength, unplanned, unmapped and undirected. Not many from among the Indians, who began to feel the brunt of this force as it turned against them, had visualized that such a day would come when this unrest, which they helped to engineer, would ever be directed against them. Orthodox leaders of the two parties who tried to curb the sporadic outbursts of emotional violence, found to their dismay that they had somehow overestimated their hold upon the people.

Why was this?

The answer is simple. A change had come over the people. They were not the same docile, dumb and lethargic Indians to whom Gandhi appealed in the early days of his first movement. Two and a half decades had altered them beyond all recognition. A self-assurance had come to the common man. He showed a careless disregard of his own life and safety in serving the cause that stirred him emotionally. He did not stop to reason or argue. He disregarded the maxim that discretion was the better part of valor. His courage often bordered on recklessness. At times he paid for his actions with his life. It was in keeping with the mood of the country.

Those of us who watched this unrest grow, found it difficult to analyze and explain it. The fact, however, was more important than its source and origin.

The course of the Indian revolution would perhaps

have run differently had the British continued, after the war, to resist the demand for India's independence. Then, at least, this force of unrest would have been unleashed against them and pent-up feelings would have found their natural outlet. But with the end of the war and the defeat of Churchill and die-hard Toryism in England, a new spirit was noticeable in Britain's India policy. The British Cabinet mission that came to India made it quite clear that Britain was preparing to quit. It went further and said that Britain would quit in any case, whether or not there was agreement in India among the Indian political parties. Behind this British decision, which was a political fact, there was the spirit of the new Britain which rose on the ashes of the old. It was to be found in the words of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. A. V. Alexander, who said in the House of Commons, "We offer India independence and freedom because it is our own birthright and because it is the birthright we desire to accord to men and women in all parts of the world."

To the Indian, freedom was now not only in sight, it was almost in hand.

This change in Indo-British relations directly affected the political situation at home. The position was analogous to that of the Allied powers who had merged their differences and amalgamated conflicting ideologies to face a common enemy in Hitler and Nazi Germany. Tory England, Soviet Russia and isolationist America hung together so long as that common enemy threatened each of them with extinction, but with the liquidation of that common enemy, those same Allied powers of World War II tended to go each its own way.

So it was in India also. Once it became apparent

that the British were ready to hand over power, the various political groups and parties began to find the points of conflict between them, losing sight of the main perspective which was freedom. The Congress had its points of difference with the League; the untouchable would no longer accept his inferior status and was ready to assail the caste Hindu; there was the struggle between capital and labor, between employer and employee, between landowner and peasant.

Even within so well-organized a party as the Congress, one noticed the schisms that occurred daily. While right up to 1942 anyone from among the Congress fold could have signed any check on behalf of the Congress and it would have been honored, the right of signing that check now became a moot point in the deliberations that took place within and outside the party.

It was natural that this should be so. In the past, on the broad canvas on which the Congress operated, the have's and the have-not's of India could be seen together. The fact that they were both unfree formed a bond between them, which linked them closely. This bond, resulting from their subject status, was sufficient to hold them together, even though on many other points, their respective interests conflicted and even clashed. But with freedom almost won and with the British ready to depart, it became difficult for a millionaire capitalist, like Birla, to remain in the same party as the underground Socialist leader, Jayaprakash Narayan.

Thus the revolution in India was not over when the British decided to quit the land. The unrest in the country did not abate with the formation of a national government. The quitting of power by the British was

merely the first phase of that revolution, and while orthodox elements within and outside the Congress believed that the fight had ended in India, the truth was that only a phase of it was over. The common man, as represented by railwaymen, postmen, bank clerks, mill and factory workers, put in claim for their two cents' worth of that heritage which the British were to leave behind. Strikes, *hartals*, deadlocks and disagreements became a normal feature of our everyday life and one saw, as in every other country in the world, labor—manual and clerical—organize itself each on its own small platform.

Behind all these organizations, new and old, and behind their manifestations of rebellion against authority, whether British-controlled or otherwise, was that same steadily growing force—unrest. It was working itself up to a crescendo.

To preserve law and order, the Indian governments had to resort to the same police and same military which had hitherto so crudely preserved order in the country. The reason was that there was no other machinery whereby law and order could be maintained. Public opinion had not had time to organize itself in a free India. It seemed illogical that popular Indian governments should have to resort to the police and the army to curb the activities of fellow Indians. Yet not to use the police and military would have led to chaos, bloodshed and possibly civil war.

This force of unrest, free from the limitations of non-violence, has now become the most outstanding fact in India today. There is nothing else in the whole political pattern which is so clearly discernible. The pity is that it still remains haphazard, unplanned and unmapped, and that there is no directing genius behind

it. It has no political label, no political flag, no positive ideology and no unified political leadership behind it.

There is, therefore, something missing in the Indian political equation which has still to be solved. It is quite certain that those who are on the political scene at present, are not able to mould the new force in any one particular direction. Leadership in India, great as it was in the days of our struggle against the British, has exhausted itself in that struggle. As with Churchill at the end of the war, Gandhi has played his part, and with all the reverence that one still owes him, it appears as if the people have gone beyond him, beyond his ideology, beyond his nonviolence. New factors have come into play on the Indian scene of which Gandhi's ideology did not take account. Consequently his ideology and his insistence on truth and nonviolence no longer solve the problems that face the country. Gandhi, however, has never budged from those principles. In the days of the worst "communal" rioting in India, after Calcutta had witnessed "the greatest massacre in history," after the stabbing of Indians by Indians in the streets of Bombay, Ahmedabad and elsewhere, Gandhi spoke of "hanging our heads in sorrow." In his characteristic manner, so like a man who did not belong to this world, he naïvely said at a prayer meeting in New Delhi, "Everything seems to be going wrong in this land."

He added that if they would only listen to him, all would be well with India. If all the people "purified themselves as Indians" they would have succeeded in learning the true lesson of the *charkha* (the spinning wheel). Maybe that was the ultimate answer, but it was difficult to expect the average Indian, newly lib-

erated, to accept the lessons of a primitive and crudely constructed spinning wheel in the age of the atom bomb.

The more realistic among us believed that we must march with the times even if in the end we destroy ourselves, for it is better to live in the moment and live fully than to be out of tune with the surrounding world.

While Gandhi lamented that everything seemed to be going wrong in the land, there were others who felt rich in experiencing the thrill of attaining freedom, whatever had been the cost. The rioting in Bombay and Calcutta, with dead bodies strewn in the open streets, presented an ugly picture of India in its first blush of freedom. But if one could dismiss the happenings of the present and look upon the whole land in its true perspective, remembering the servile past and now looking squarely upon the present, one realized how some secret magic had transformed the scene. From a once static, dead and slothful continent, this land of ours had awakened to reality and to life. A new horizon appeared before us even though we were unfamiliar with it. Our vision and our values had changed. Uncomfortable in these new surroundings and unaccustomed to using our newly found freedom, we often appeared lost and made mistakes. We tried to draw on our vast and primeval wells of tradition, culture and past glory to help us face situations which were new to us. We tried to rediscover the landmarks of our ancient civilization which had been washed away. Our experience of administration had been negligible. We had only the experience of struggle to draw upon. There was always our suffering from which we had learned so much. Ahead of us was hope, but there was

also an uncertainty of the future, for we had launched into an adventure that was new.

But we were surely moving. That was significant. The look on the face of the country had changed. The spirit of revolt, which was once the prerogative only of the more cultured amongst them, had now spread over all the land. It had reached the humblest of our people. It had awakened them to a new consciousness. In fact, it appeared as if a new nation had replaced the old.

There was struggle ahead, internal struggle, and plenty of it. It would have to be faced. Again there would be dead bodies unidentified in our morgues as some fanatic would rush out, knife in hand, to stab someone whose politics he did not like. There would surely be more riots, more disturbances, more strikes and more innocent blood shed. A people awakened cannot easily rest.

Yet with all this ahead, there are no more tears to be shed. In time political passions will calm down and this fratricidal war will abate. The Indian will learn to live in peace whether it is in one geographical unit or two.

But whatever may be the boundaries of my land, I know I shall have my freedom soon and I shall have my self-respect. The land of my fathers will find again its rightful place in this world.

